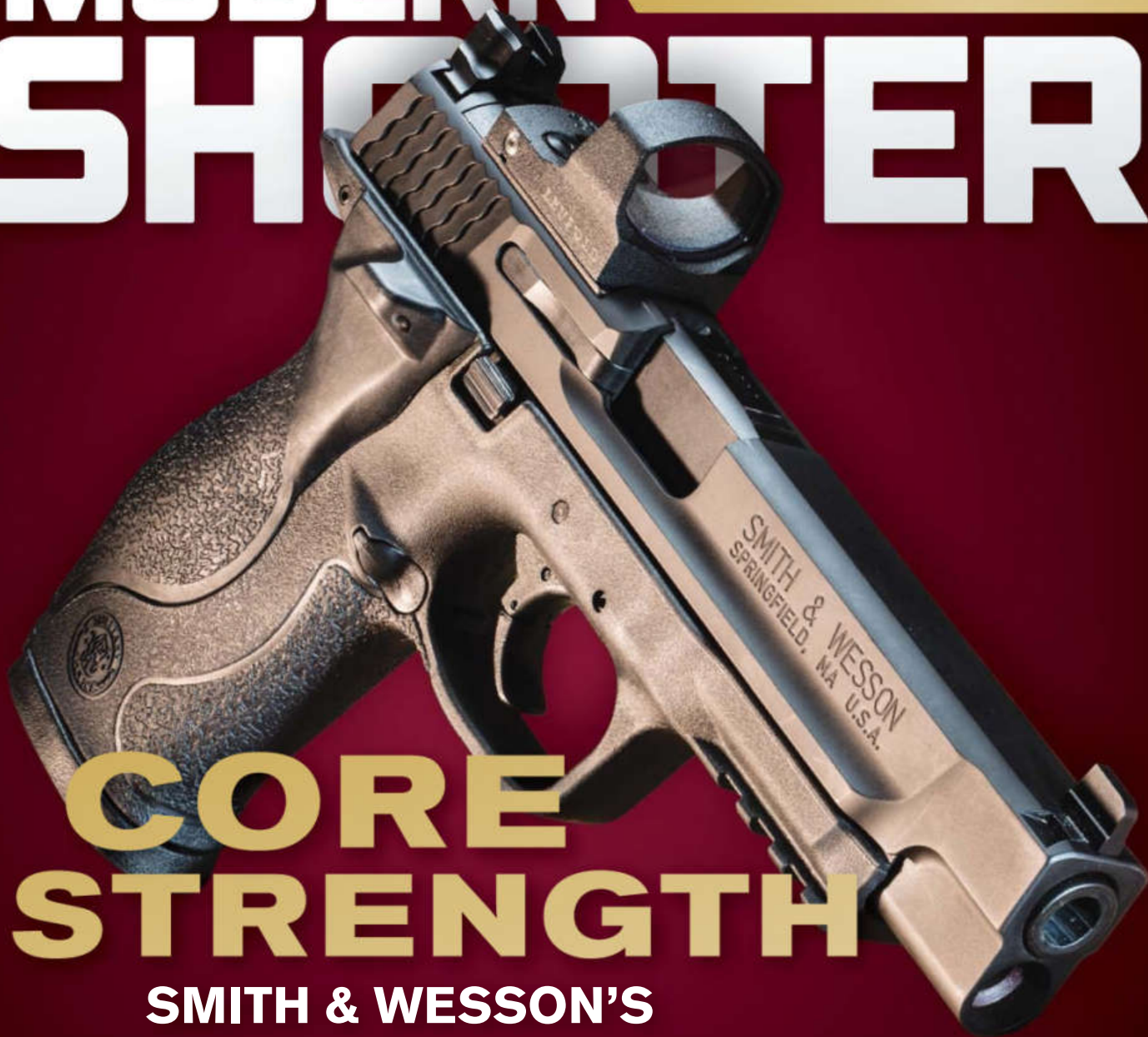


GunDigest Presents

FALL 2015

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MOSSBERG'S HUNT-READY PATRIOT PG. 20



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THE TIME IS NOW

After a recent move to Colorado, I procrastinated for several weeks before enrolling in a local concealed carry course. Like anything else that involves interacting with and forking over money to state or federal governments—whether that's the DMV, county clerk or DNR equivalent—I'm usually less than

enthusiastic about the ordeal. What finally got me off the schnide was, a bit unexpectedly, my wife. "If our Second Amendment right is the responsibility you say it is," she graciously reminded me, "then we've got to take that seriously. I signed us up for a concealed carry class this Saturday." Well, how do you like them apples? She'd done her own independent research on state laws, found a certified class and signed us up. This is from the woman who, until recently, had never fired a gun in her life.

We turned the class and following afternoon into a date. We went

out for lunch and talked at length about training, firearm selection and practical solutions for everyday carry. Finally, I asked her where her interest in firearms and self defense, had come from. "You know," she said, with a smile, "I *do* read your magazine. It's not that I was ever against concealed carry, I was just never exposed to it. I didn't know anything about guns, so I was afraid of them."

In most places in America, we have a tremendous right and responsibility to personal defense. But it means we have to take advantage of the opportunity, make the most of state laws and take ownership for our training. Sign up for a carry course, fill out the paperwork, and get the training you need to be a well informed, well trained and armed citizen.

These pages are filled with expert advice and reviews on the best guns and gear to help you effectively defend yourself. There's never been a better time to build your skill, add to your gun collection or sign up for a training course near you.



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700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54990-0001
(715) 445-2214

www.gundigest.com

e-mail us: GunDigestOnline@fwmedia.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF ERIC CONN

MANAGING EDITOR DREW WARDEN

DESIGNER DANE ROYER

ONLINE EDITORS

COREY GRAFF, ELWOOD SHELTON

CONTRIBUTORS

JON R. SUNDRA, RICHARD MANN,
PHIL MASSARO, BRAD FITZPATRICK,
DICK JONES, DAVID HART, BOB WHALEY,
JEFF JONES, BRIAN MCCOMBIE,
ALEX LANDEEN, ROBERT SADOWSKI

ADVERTISING SALES

888-457-2873

LORI HALLMAN x13642

lori.hallman@fwcommunity.com

STEVE MADSON x13441

steve.madson@fwcommunity.com

New England/Mid-Atlantic Region
SCOTT BUCHMAYR, 978-462-6335

Midwest/Southeast Region
AMOS CROWLEY, 440-564-5255

ADVERTISING ASSISTANT

CAROL BUSSE

F+W, A Content + eCommerce Company

ACTING CEO, CFO/COO JIM OGLE

PRESIDENT SARA DOMVILLE

CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER CHAD PHELPS

SENIOR VP, MFG. & PRODUCTION PHIL GRAHAM
VP, COMMUNICATIONS STACIE BERGER

F+W Firearms/Knives Group

GROUP PUBLISHER JAMIE WILKINSON

PUBLISHER JIM SCHLENDER

SENIOR VP, ADVERTISING SALES DAVID DAVEL

NEWSSTAND DIRECTOR SCOTT T. HILL
scott.hill@procirc.com

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR MARK LILLA

Subscription Services

US and Canada: 1-800-829-9127

Outside the US: 386-246-3417

PO Box 421751, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1751

Email: GunDigestSubscriptions@fwmedia.com

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CORE STRENGTH

Smith & Wesson's M&P Pro C.O.R.E.

DICK JONES

WE LIVE OUR LIVES IN AN INCREASINGLY ELECTRONIC WORLD.

That technology has generated a monumental change in the firearms industry. Now, the development of new designs and variations of existing models is simple because design, machining and finishing are all aided by computerization. These advances in electronics have found their way into every aspect of our lives, but until recently, there have been few high-tech electronic additions to firearms.





The M&P Pro C.O.R.E. takes the proven striker-fired pistol and adds modern optics to the platform. Photos by Alex Landeen



The C.O.R.E. features a rail for lasers and flashlights, as well as a set of three-dot iron sights.



The C.O.R.E. incorporates extra-high iron sights for cowitnessing with optics.

Obviously, one of the most important areas of electronics in firearms accessories is in the form of sights, both laser and optical. Recently, a remarkable number of firearms manufacturers have added a lower rail to pistols to allow the addition of lights, lasers and other accessories. Last year, Smith & Wesson added an integral mounting system for optical reflex sights and designated the guns as C.O.R.E. models, the acronym indicating Competition Optics Ready Equipment.

The C.O.R.E. comes with five bases and screws for mounting six different optical reflex sights. There are mounting bases for the JPoint, Doctor, C-More, STS, InSight MRDS and the Leupold Delta Point, the sight I chose for the test. The three-dot iron sights supplied on the C.O.R.E. are extra high and allow co-witnessing with the reflex sight. Of course, there's also a lower rail

for mounting a laser or light or a combination thereof.

What makes this work so well is that the top of the slide is milled down, allowing the sight to sit lower over the bore. This makes the gun more compact and reduces the offset of the sighting plane. The closer the sight is to the target, the less difference there is in zero at different distances. Obviously, it also greatly simplifies the process of mounting a reflex sight because the mounting location is already prepared to that specific sight. All that's required is to remove the plate that comes on the gun, choose the appropriate mounting adapter and screws and mount the sight. The iron sights can be removed then or left in place as a co-witness system in the event the reflex sight fails or the batteries are used up.

As delivered, there's a cover plate over the mounting



The M&P Pro C.O.R.E. is compatible with several popular reflex sights. The author opted for the Leupold Delta Point.



area, and it's hardly noticeable. What are noticeable are the high co-witness sights. They are almost twice as high as normal sights, and I found them to work really well when using the gun as it comes in the box. They are slide windage adjustable at the rear, but there's no provision for elevation corrections. This is a gun primarily designed for optics, so adjustment is of little importance when the C.O.R.E. is used as designed. I did notice an issue with the Leupold Delta Point I chose in that the Delta Point or the rear sight had to be removed before unlocking and locking the elevation and windage adjustments.

Shooting the C.O.R.E. without an optic installed isn't a lot different from the standard M&P. There are three different grip inserts to get a better fit; I have always liked the way the M&P feels in my hand and only

SMITH & WESSON C.O.R.E

Caliber	9mm Luger
Capacity	17 + 1
Magazines	Two black nitride with witness holes
Barrel	5 inch
Sights	Dovetailed 3-dot system, raised for co-witness functionality
Frame	Polymer
Slide	Stainless Steel
Length	8.5 inches
Height	5.625 inches
Weight	26 ounces
Options	N/A
MSRP	\$769.00
Website	smith-wesson.com

S&W C.O.R.E. standing target: Many will find the addition of a reflex sight improves their scores.



swapped out to test the Radetec Round Count system, but more about that later. For some reason, the M&P series of pistols seem to shoot flatter than most of the polymer-framed striker-fired guns I've tested, and I've tested about all of them at this point. The bore axis is low, but I think it's more about shape than geometry. The slide provides an excellent gripping surface at the rear with parallel vertical sides and a scalloped pattern

that's easy to grip without being abrasive.

I've heard some complaints about the hinged trigger system on the M&P guns, but it doesn't bother me at all. I shot one of the .22 rimfire versions quite a bit before I put much time on a centerfire gun and I've never noticed a problem. The trigger on my test gun broke right at 6 pounds after a reasonable first stage and with a normal amount of backlash for a striker-fired

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	AVG VELOCITY (fps)	STD. DEV (fps)	BEST GROUP (in.)	AVG GROUP (in.)
Winchester 115 grain FMJ	1,128	22	2.11	2.56
Black Hills 124 grain JHP +P	1,186	32	1.16	2.15
Hornady 115 XTP	1,140	23	1.48	2.35

Bench test results: 25 yards. Five groups of five shots



If, for some reason, your optic fails, you can easily fall back on the iron sights.



Reliability is a crucial component of the M&P platform's success, and the C.O.R.E. continues that tradition. *Photos by Alex Landeen*



Like previous M&P models, the C.O.R.E. feels great in the hand.

ACCESSORIZE YOUR HANDGUN

In addition to the Leupold Delta Point, I added a couple of other options to the C.O.R.E.

First was the Radetec Ammo Control LED Advisor system that gives the shooter a blue indicator light when the magazine is down to three rounds, a green light when down to two rounds, a solid red light at one round and a flashing red light when the magazine is empty. A button in the rear of the grip insert activates the system, and the receiving and warning mechanism is all contained in the grip insert that's similar in size to

the largest one. The sending unit is a button magnet in a replacement magazine follower. You do lose one round of magazine capacity, but the system actually works pretty well. I used it in a couple of stages on the training range at B&B Precision Machine, and it will prevent you from running the gun to slide lock. It sells for \$259.00. radetec.com

I also added a Crimson Trace CMR 206 Rail Master laser. It mounts easily on the front rail and provides an instant green aiming point painted on the target that's visible even in normal sunlight. The

CMR 206 mounts to the front rail and is activated by tab switches at its base. The switch is placed in alignment with the shooter's weak-hand thumb when using a proper two-hand grip. It offers three modes of operation, momentary, strobe and constant. It uses a single 1/3N battery and has a run time of two hours. It features a five-minute auto shut-off for power conservation. Lasers have proven themselves as a viable aiming system in low light, and I highly recommend them for defensive firearms. It sells for \$229.00. crimsontrace.com



Disassembly and reassembly is as simple as putting new batteries in the TV remote.

gun. The trigger was good for a service gun, but most serious competitors replace the stock system. Controls are well placed; the slide release is ambidextrous, and the magazine release is reversible. Fieldstripping is easy and self-explanatory if you have experience with striker-fired pistols.

Accuracy was good. I used Winchester 115-grain full metal jacket and Black Hills 124-grain +P hollow points. Both shot groups better than my capabilities at around 2 inches at 25 yards off a bench rest. I experienced zero malfunctions with either brand or with my 124-grain coated Blue Boy Bullet reloads. The Delta Point system I chose worked very well for precision shooting because the pyramid reticle allowed a precise hold. **MS**



The C.O.R.E. takes a comfortable and reliable pistol and makes it even easier to shoot well. Photos by Alex Landeen



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HOW TO BUILD THE ULTIMATE GUN CASE

Check out these 14 easy steps for building a custom gun case.

DUSTY GIBSON

BEAUTIFUL GUNS DESERVE BEAUTIFUL CASES.

Watertight, airtight, dent-resistant and shatter-resistant—just a few ways to describe the practically indestructible nature of Pelican cases. These properties result in an ideal transportation system for firearms during air travel or backcountry adventures. Though some may argue the design of any gun case is no match for a thief with the right tools, Pelican cases keep honest people honest while protecting your favorite firearms.

Designed with a reinforced polypropylene shell that would make a crash test dummy jealous, Pelican cases have earned the trust of everyone from photographers to the U.S. military and its strict specifications. Beyond the polymer shell, the exterior of these cases also includes tamper-proof hinges, stainless steel padlock eyelets and even a pressure equalization valve. But the Pelican's impressive exterior shell is only half of the equation.

Popping open four double-throw latches, you'll soon realize where the real magic happens. Beyond a rubber o-ring seal lay three dense pads of polyurethane foam.

These slabs of foam line the top and bottom of the case, providing the cushioning necessary to protect firearms and gear from turbulence. In its factory-new configuration, the foam slabs are an open canvas waiting to be carved with the custom-cut dimensions of rifles, shotguns, handguns, ammo or accessories.

Don't let the Pelican's sophisticated design prevent you from transforming it into the perfect travel companion for your guns and gear. Luckily, personalizing your own Pelican case with custom-cut foam is a simple DIY project that requires very few tools and minimal expertise.

We've made it easier than ever to customize a Pelican case with the following step-by-step guide to building the ultimate gun case.

1 CHOOSE A PELICAN CASE THAT BEST SUITS YOUR NEEDS. Depending on what you want to transport, Pelican makes hundreds of cases in a variety of sizes. Be sure to measure the overall length of the



Pelican offers many cases. Choose the right one for the job. Photo by Dusty Gibson



Photo by Dusty Gibson

firearm intended for the case, and then refer to Pelican's website to check the interior dimensions of the desired case.

You should also take into account airline baggage size requirements. Many gun cases exceed the established oversize bag size set by commercial airlines, making them subject to expensive baggage fees. The most common airline oversize bag threshold is 62-inches, which is the total sum of an item's length, width and height. Exceeding this threshold may result in additional fees. After researching, it appears the largest Pelican case for transporting long guns with 34 inches or less of overall length that fits under this threshold is the Pelican 1700 case, which was customized in the following steps.

» **TIP:** If your gun is longer than 34 inches overall, consider field stripping it so it fits into the Pelican 1700 or a smaller-sized case.

2 START WITH A BLANK CANVAS. Pelican sells cases with two types of foam: solid slabs and Pick N' Pluck. For the most custom setup, use the solid slabs and cut them yourself. The Pick N' Pluck is easy to use for rectangular objects but is not completely form fitting around curved edges or custom shapes.

3 SAFETY FIRST. Before laying out the case to your desired orientation, be sure your firearms are unloaded.

4 LAY IT OUT. Place objects on the solid slab of foam

in the orientation you wish them to lay in the case. Depending on how the case will be most commonly carried, distribute the weight evenly so one side is not abnormally heavy. It's also recommended to put the firearm's buttstock on the wheel-end of the case so the weight of the firearm is evenly distributed while rolling the case.

5 PROPER SPACING. Keeping objects spaced at least 1 inch apart will provide adequate padding and protection. Consider adding more space between optics and fragile pieces, or less space between magazines, ammo or other accessories.

» **TIP:** If possible, leave empty space so you can custom-cut more objects at a later date if you get a new suppressor or want to allocate more space for ammunition.

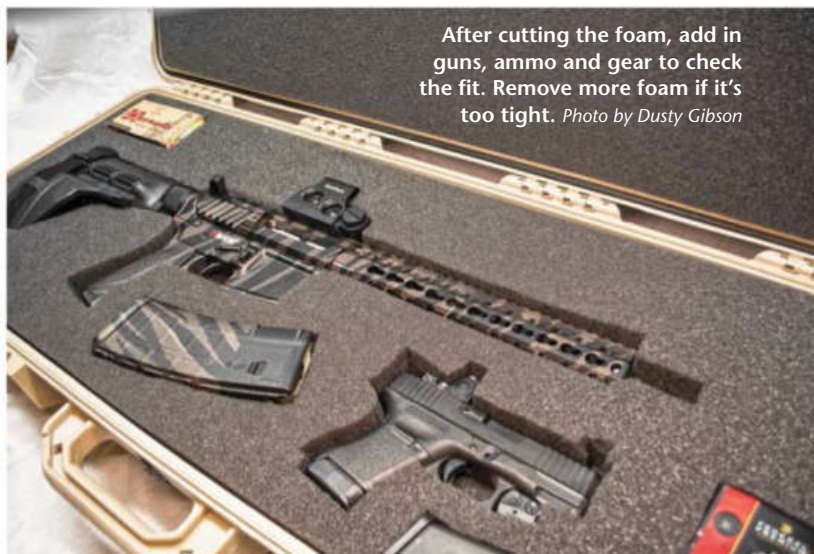
6 INVERT THE LAYOUT. To hide the trace marks made in the next steps, invert your layout so the trace marks will be facing downward and not visible. This is not required but does make an aesthetic difference.

7 TRACE IT OUT. Using a permanent marker, carefully trace around each object. Keep the trace marks close to the objects for a tighter fit. If you find the fit is too tight, you can always go back later and remove more foam.

» **TIP:** Trace in a well-lit environment.



Trace close to the firearm or object to ensure a tight and secure fit. Photo by: Dusty Gibson



After cutting the foam, add in guns, ammo and gear to check the fit. Remove more foam if it's too tight. Photo by Dusty Gibson

8 CHOOSE YOUR BLADE. Cutting the foam with clean, precise lines requires the right knife for the job. Some sources suggest using serrated knives or an electric kitchen knife, but I find a 3- to 4-inch blade with a curved, pointed edge works best. It needs to be long enough to cut all the way through the foam but small enough for neat, precise cuts in tight areas.

9 CUT THE FOAM. Pull the foam out of the case, and lay it on a table or work bench so the cutting area is hanging off the edge with an exposed underside for the knife to penetrate all the way through the foam. Following the trace marks from Step 7, cut the foam using straight up and down sawing motions. Start with the largest object, and cut one object at a time. Take it slow, and focus on making straight, clean cuts. Try to keep all the cuts in one continuous shape (more on this later).

» **TIP:** The Pelican 1700 comes with three layers of foam. Only cut through one layer and go back later if you wish to cut the other layers to increase storage space.

10 FINAL CUTS. After completing the cuts, replace the foam into the case and add your guns, ammo and gear to check for proper fit. The items should fit snugly, yet not too tight where the foam pulls out when removing an item from the case.

» **TIP:** If the fit is too tight, remove more foam in small increments for the most custom fit.

11 KEEP THE CUTOUTS. Proper tracing and cutting

technique leaves you with life-sized foam cutouts. Keep these cutouts so you can replace them into the foam slab as needed. Let's say you're going to the range and don't want to bring your pistol; replace the foam cutout so you don't have a big empty spot. Replacing the foam will increase the padding of nearby objects compared to leaving an empty spot.

12 GLUE BOTTOM FOAM SLABS TOGETHER. Only do this once you're certain you don't want to add any more cuts to the foam. Gluing the two bottom slabs together will increase their functionality by keeping objects from slipping in-between them. Instead of two separate pieces, you'll now have one solid piece of foam.

13 LOCK IT UP. Now that your case is complete, you'll want to lock it up while traveling. It's suggested to purchase at least two locks per long gun case. If you are flying with firearms, make sure to buy locks that are not accessible by TSA. The author uses a matching set of four Master Lock Model 131Q locks for airline travel. They are sold in a single package and are all keyed to the same key. These locks are lightweight, yet strong enough to keep the honest people honest.

14 MULTITASKING. Additional foam slabs are available for purchase aftermarket. Purchase another set of foam slabs to custom-cut them for other guns in your collection. That way one Pelican case can adapt to multiple guns just by changing between custom-cut foam slabs. **MS**

“GUN CONTROL? YOU WON’T BELIEVE THEIR PLANS FOR FOOD...”

Bad News...

Washington has an agenda, and it’s MORE than just your guns and ammo.

They think people like you and me are a bit “odd.” They don’t understand why we keep firearms and a food stockpile in case of crisis.

But those people are just hiding their heads in the sand. They are dead wrong -- and **you are dead right.**

You’ve seen the evidence and you know the situation is way too serious not to do something about it. When a crisis hits, you’ll be ready. You’ll make darn sure your family won’t go hungry.

The fact is, if you don’t take action or if you stockpile the wrong foods, you could be setting your family up to starve. It sounds harsh, but the truth is too many people with good intentions are making critical mistakes with their food stockpiles.

MISTAKES LIKE...

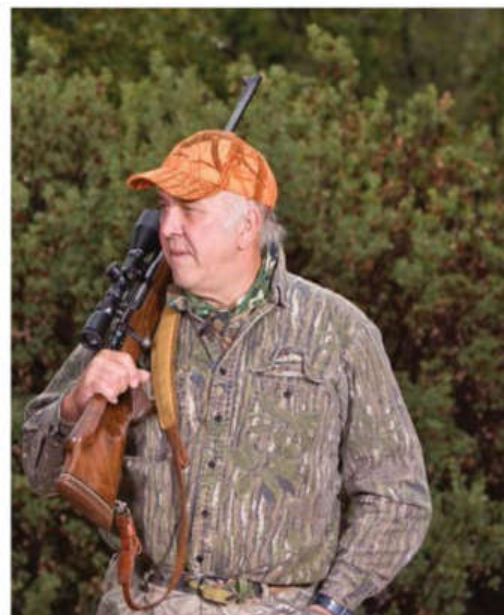
- ▶ Buying MREs (meals ready to eat) with a 5 year shelf life (depending on where you buy them, they could be nearly expired)...
- ▶ Getting gross survival foods that taste terrible and are so high in salt, MSG and preservatives you could clog your arteries and get yourself sick...
- ▶ Or simply buying the wrong foods and leaving a critical hole in your meal plan, which means your family can become malnourished...

Well, I decided to stop worrying. Obviously, waiting for the government to give me a handout in a disaster just wasn’t an option for me. And I was completely turned off by the crazy prices of survival food sold by most stores.

So I got in touch with my buddy Frank Bates and put my order in for his Food4Patriots survival food kits.

THIS IS FRANK’S NEW LINE OF SURVIVAL FOOD:

- ▶ **Food4Patriots is an incredible value.** This high quality survival food is without any fillers or poor-quality “franken-food” that the other guys use to pad their survival meals. They are made and packaged right here in the U.S.A. You won’t believe the prices on these kits – a fraction of the price that other brands charge.
- ▶ There’s no fancy packaging, it’s military-grade sturdy stuff and can stand up to the crazy things that happen in a crisis. This food has a **shelf life of up to 25 years**, so you have complete peace of mind for the long term. And he’s using the most compact kits so you can store them anywhere in your home without any extra hassle. They’re sturdy, waterproof and stack easily. And extremely covert too.
- ▶ You can make these meals in less than 20 minutes; just add boiling water, simmer, and serve. I tried ‘em and I think they **taste as good or better than any other survival food I’ve EVER had.** And you get a whole slew of choices, including breakfast, lunch and dinner so you don’t get stuck eating the same thing day-in and day-out.
- ▶ Frank has come up with some impressive FREE bonuses that are **ONLY** available to folks who purchase one of his kits on a first-come, first-served basis. For example, my 3-month kit came with 5,400+ heirloom survival seeds, 4 hard copy books, an 11-in-1 survival tool, and some other cool stuff.



Protect your family in a crisis with 25-year shelf life survival food from getfood114.com

I want to make sure you don’t miss out on this because **this is the #1 item to hoard today.**

Here’s why... If you don’t take action to get your food stockpile right now, you’ll be in the same boat as the brainwashed masses who think “everything is fine.” And if a crisis hits and your family asks, “What are we going to eat?” your mouth will go dry and you’ll feel powerless.

But what if you decide right now to secure your food stockpile instead? Just **imagine how much better you’ll feel right away.** And if a crisis hits and your family asks, “What are we going to eat?” you’ll calmly reassure them that they’re safe and they will have plenty to eat.

Listen, I can’t predict the future. I don’t know exactly when or how a crisis will hit. But from everything I see, it could be soon and it could be a big one. That’s why I really want you to get the same peace of mind that I do.

P.S. Got a call from Frank and you’ll never believe who just tried to buy up his entire supply of food! You’ll be shocked!

➔ **LOG-ON NOW TO GETFOOD114.COM** ➔



THREE AMIGOS

From giant elk to puny pronghorn, with white-tails and mule deer in between, one hunter set a goal to spend a single season traveling the country in pursuit of big-game glory—all with a trio of Patriot bolt-action rifles from Mossberg.

JOSH DAHLKE



Mossberg's new line of Patriot bolt-action rifles delivers outstanding accuracy for an incredibly low price. You'll find more than 50 models with various finishes in 11 of the most popular hunting calibers. Pictured here (from left to right) are Patriots chambered in .270 Win., .308 Win. and .243 Win.—three calibers that can handle a variety of big game species.



IT HAS ALL THE MAKINGS OF A DREAM SEASON.

As I write this, the center console of my pickup truck is filled with tags for multiple species of big-game animals in multiple states. One tag—for eastern Nebraska's Winnebago Indian Reservation—already has two notches from a double of whitetail does that fell to two clean shots during a five-day hunt in early September. From the Cornhusker State I'll head to Wyoming for a cow elk, then Montana for a pronghorn. It continues from there.

Throughout my entire journey, I'll be traveling with three amigos from Mossberg's new Patriot rifle line: one chambered in .243 Win., another in .270 Win. and the third in .308 Win.

It's easy to get into an argument about "the best caliber for hunting so-and-so," but you'd be hard pressed to argue that my choices for this year's hunting adventure aren't up to snuff. They're three of the top-selling calibers of all time. But why? Let's take a look with Mike Stock, a Winchester cartridge guru and the center-fire product manager at Winchester Ammunition.

PRONGHORN: .243 WIN.

"With 90- to 100-grain bullets consistently pushing roughly 3,000 fps, the .243 Win. is a great choice for pronghorn and deer," Stock said. "It's flat-shooting and delivers a tremendous amount of energy without damaging too much meat. Recoil is a non-issue with this cartridge, and its shorter action allows for quick and comfortable follow-up shots."

Stock's mention of meat preservation is crucial for me. Pronghorns are extremely tasty, but there isn't much flesh on their small frame, so it's important for me to preserve every morsel. Even with less-than-



ideal shot placement, the .243 Win. won't destroy too much meat. At the same time, it offers sufficient killing power (approx. 800 ft.-lbs. of energy) out to 400 yards with my chosen ammo—Nosler's Ballistic Tip Ammunition with 90-grain bullets. Even at 400 yards, this bullet is only dropping 21 inches with a 200-yard zero, which makes holdover a relatively easy exercise on an animal measuring 15 inches from its belly line to the top of its back. I'll be hunting these speedsters in eastern Montana where it's usually windy, so I plan to limit shots to less than 300 yards to stay within the bounds of my shooting comfort level.

DEER: .270 WIN.

"The .270 Winchester is a very versatile cartridge. It's small enough to be used on pronghorn, while still large enough to confidently take elk and deer," Stock said. "Bullet design has a lot to do with it. Typically, .270 Win. cartridges are loaded with 130- or 150-grain bullets, most of which are pushing 3,000 fps."

I've shot several deer with the .270 Win., and none have lived to tell about it. These deer were taken with a variety of cartridge/bullet combinations, and they've all performed as advertised. I'm a huge fan of the

cartridge because it's readily available, pounds with minimal recoil, and like Stock said, it's super versatile. I've already killed two whitetails this season with my Patriot .270—one with a Nosler 130-grain ballistic tip at 50 yards, the other with a Federal Premium 130-grain Trophy Bonded Tip at 180 yards. Both deer didn't go far. I'll continue my Nosler testing on deer this year by firing the 130-grain E-Tip bullet from the company's Trophy Grade Ammunition.

ELK: .308 WIN.

"There's a reason many match-accuracy shooters look to the .308 Win. as their go-to cartridge," Stock said. "It's capable of precision, consistency and flat trajectories. These are necessities when targeting elk and deer. Not only is the .308 Win. accurate, but it also provides ideal long-range knockdown power."

I hold a surplus cow elk tag for southeastern Wyoming. It will be a rugged hunt in high country, so when I squeeze my Mossberg's trigger on a juicy cow, I have no desire to follow a long blood trail. I've yet to settle on my cartridge of choice. Assuming the Patriot will happily eat it, I'll probably serve Nosler's Trophy Grade Ammunition tipped with the ultra-depedable



NOSLER'S E-TIP BULLET

Whether you're shooting a precision match or trying to knock down a moose like John Nosler did when he was driven to design the famous Partition, Nosler makes a bullet to suit every rifleman's demands.

The E-Tip is a copper-alloy bullet from Nosler that you can get loaded in the company's Trophy Grade Ammunition. "The E-tip was developed over several years to offer ultra high weight retention in a tipped, expanding bullet design," said Mason Payer, Nosler's marketing manager. "The E-Tip's terminal performance and consistent accuracy make it a superior choice for hunting big game." And if you live somewhere such as the communist state of California, it meets lead-free hunting bullet standards.

Learn more at Nosler.com.

Partition bullet at a weight of 165 grains. With a 200-yard zero, this bullet is dropping just 24 inches at 400 yards and retaining 1,429 foot-pounds of energy. The Partition's rock-solid design offers high weight retention and excellent penetration. So, even if I screw up and hit a cow in her shoulder, the bullet will do its job to seal the deal swiftly and ethically.

CALLING FOR BACKUP

Planning a multi-state hunt for a variety of big-game animals can be a logistical nightmare. Once you've sifted through rulebooks, lined up tags and developed a killer gameplan, the last thing you want is to end up in the middle of a prairie or on top of a mountain without a working weapon. No matter how dependable your rifle, things happen. Your gear could fall prey to a late-night heist while you're shackled up in a cheap motel. You could drop your grandpa's rifle off a cliff. You never know. That's why I always prefer to bring along at least one extra gun. Of course, I've chosen uno, dos and tres for this season.

Depending on what species are on your docket, try to be practical about choosing backup rifles. My pronghorn rifle is chambered in .243 Win.; that's also a fine choice for deer. My deer rifle eats .270 Win., which is great for antelope, too. In fact, with the right bullet, it can take pronghorn, deer and elk with efficiency and

maximum meat preservation. My elk rifle is chambered in .308 Win.—also a great fallback for deer.

MOSSBERG PATRIOT: PROFILE AND TESTING

"Built rugged, proudly American." That's Mossberg's tag line, and it has been proven by the more than 10 million pump-action Model 500 shotguns to roll off Mossberg's assembly line and into the hands of hunters.

While a shotgun might be the first firearm that comes to mind when you think of Mossberg, the company's first product in 1919 was actually a handgun. From there, countless shotgun and rifle models were developed and brought to market.

In early 2015, the shooting industry was abuzz when Mossberg unveiled a new line of bolt-action rifles bearing the Patriot name.

"The Patriot was a unique project, as it was driven by our customers' requests for a more traditional, wood-stocked hunting rifle," said John MacLellan, Mossberg's vice president of sales and marketing. "Our engineering design team looked at many of the classics, their dimensions and overall appeal. From that, the Patriot was born."

According to MacLellan, Mossberg re-engineered its current bolt-action platform, adding a streamlined bolt handle, redesigning the bolt knob and creating classic-



The author tested four types of ammunition on paper from the bench. All four performed well, but Nosler's Trophy Grade E-Tip was the clear winner with a three-shot group measuring a hair under 3/4 of an inch.

style walnut stocks. "We retained the features that our customers rated as most desirable: Lightning Bolt Action (LBA); Adjustable Trigger System; compact 22-inch barrel lengths; lightweight polymer, flush box magazine; and fluted barrels and bolts," MacLellan said.

After thorough industry-insider feedback, the promise of the Patriot was so strong Mossberg transitioned all its 4x4 and ATR rifles into the Patriot lineup with an initial offering of over 63 models at the 2015 SHOT Show. I was in the room when the curtain was lifted, and excitement among gun guys and gals was evident.

FROM THE BENCH

To test the Patriot's accuracy, I focused on a model chambered in .270 Win. It has a laminate stock with a Marinecote-finished, 22-inch fluted barrel. It weighs 7.25 pounds naked and is 42.75 inches long. I topped it with an 18.3-ounce Nikon Prostaff 7 2.5-10x42mm riflescope. The overall package is light, and it shoulders nicely. Recoil is minimal, making follow-up shots quick and painless. The detachable box magazine is perfect for jumping in and out of the truck dozens of times every day.

I tested the rifle with four types of popular ammunition: Nosler Trophy Grade E-Tip, Federal Vital-Shok Trophy Bonded Tip, Winchester Deer Season XP and Barnes VOR-TX. All were loaded with 130-grain bullets. I fired a single three-shot group from 100 yards with each—a fair and practical assessment for a hunting gun. It was 80 degrees with a 15-20mph crosswind, and my rest was a sandbag. I cleaned the Patriot's barrel and let it cool for at least 10 minutes in between each burst of shots.

All of the ammo performed well enough to confidently take a stationary shot on a big-game animal from 100 yards, with the worst group measuring less than 3 inches. Nosler prescribed the best pills in the medicine cabinet. Three consecutive shots with the E-Tips punched almost a perfect cloverleaf in the paper—just a hair under 3/4 of an inch from far edge to far edge of the two most distant holes.

A rifle capable of sub-MOA accuracy at a street price of less than \$500? That's something Mossberg can be proud of. **MS**

THE PRACTICAL/TACTICAL DICHOTOMY

(Don't let attitude overtake common sense)

JOSEPH VON BENEDIKT

“TACTICAL”—A BUZZWORD NOW SO COMMONPLACE AS TO NO LONGER HAVE ANY REAL MEANING—HAS BECOME POPULAR.

Seems like some shooters can no longer even go to the range without suiting up in tactical pants with strategically located pockets, a tactical vest laden with techy tactical gear, tactical holsters and “drag bag” tactical rifle cases, and a whole bunch of tactical attitude.

You can no more put on tactical togs and attitude and magically become SWAT-team capable as a shooter than you can buy a cowboy hat, Wrangler jeans, and a nice pair of boots and transform instantly into a working cattleman.

I recently sat at a shooting bench at a public rifle range, and listened in amazement to the two shooters at the benches to my left. One was shooting an expensive precision rifle, the other peered through a spotting scope at a downrange target. Sporting the pale skin and plush personal upholstery of indoor desk jobs with too many free donuts, they were clearly anything but genuine tactical, despite their Blackhawk and 5.11 garb. Still, they went through the routine with astonishing intensity. The guy glaring into the spotting scope would tersely spit out, “Spotter ready!” The reply would come grinding back, “Shooter ready!” Without even a pause to confirm wind conditions, wannabe number one would echo, “Send it!” and the guy with the rifle would fire. Somewhere not far downrange a steel gong would ring. Sometimes. They repeated the whole routine over, and over, and over. Every single shot.

What a waste of energy, I thought as I screwed my earplugs in deeper and placidly continued firing test

groups with whatever handload I was working up at the time. It's one thing for a professional sniper team or serious competitive team to practice working together on wind calls and shot placement, under tricky shooting conditions. It's even good to work together with a friend spotting for you when practicing at extended distances with your hunting rifle. But I'll tell you what: Those two guys had watched too many movies, or perhaps attended too many classes run by a hot-shot tactical instructor who cussed at them like a real drill sergeant and made them feel tough.

TACTICAL TOGS DON'T MAKE YOU TOUGH

Tough is inside, not a shell you wear so people can see it. Especially when you are carrying a gun. Competence is something you don't have to prove, and those who really are competent never try to be. When guns are involved, good judgment and common sense are far greater assets than a tough attitude. And you can't put on ability with a pair of tactical trousers, no matter how expensive they are.

One of the most dangerous men I know is a retired P.I. who worked Detroit. He has a disarming, engaging demeanor, and wears Hawaiian shirts, loose jeans, and loafers religiously. Another looks like a librarian, but can wield a vintage sniper rifle better than the Russians that built them. And I know middle-aged cowboys who can shoot the head off of a rattlesnake

with a pistol or pick off a running coyote at 150 yards with a bolt-action rifle, but they wear stained straw cowboy hats, loose Wranglers over their flat asses, and Carhartt jackets.

My point is this: Don't make the mistake of assuming that dressing the "tactical" part will gain you respect or authority; and don't disrespect true tactical gear by flaunting it around the local range, Olive Garden, or cinema. The guys that stuff was designed for—our boys in the trenches overseas and in Miami, Detroit, New Orleans, and so on—use it hard, and sometimes the success of their mission depends on it. But you watch, when those guys show up at the range or a shooting competition, they're likely in shorts and a tee shirt. Probably a tight tee shirt to show off the physique that their chosen lifestyle has built. But still, they leave the serious gear for when it's needed. So should you.

Now, I'm not saying you shouldn't own a tactical vest, combat boots, and a frikkin' cavalry saber if you want it. I do. If natural disasters, financial collapse, or invasion by a hostile government ever cause the breakdown of civilization, you may want and even need that gear. Just don't wear it around as if you live your life in it, and most of all, don't expect that simply by donning a bunch of tactical clothing an aura of natural skill, ability, and authority will somehow distill upon your person. Likely, all you'll look is slightly awkward.

Fit your guns to your lifestyle. Wear what is natural to you and what you are comfortable in. Don't change your manner of dressing and acting just because you've got guns.

One last note: wearing tactical gear marks you. Those with criminal intent know cop clothes, and they know when a cop is wearing them, and when a guy wearing them isn't a cop. Anywhere that concealed carry is legal, tactical garb screams "gun!" to those around you. Personally, when I'm carrying a gun I don't want the crowd to know it. I want to maintain the element of surprise, and I want to avoid the scrutiny of law enforcement who watch for armed attitudinal personalities.

KEEP IT PRACTICAL, NOT TACTICAL

OK, I got hung up a bit on clothing and gear, because it's the outward manifestation of an internal attitude. However, the real root of the pseudo-tactical evil infesting a number of otherwise decent shooters comes

from too much attitude-affecting cool factor.

Across America, the orientation of shooters has changed from hunting and traditional sport shooting to tactical shooting. Just observe the burgeoning popularity of 3-gun shooting, precision rifles, tactical carbines, and so on. In and of itself, *it's a great thing*. I can't say conclusively what's caused it, but seemingly it's a byproduct of all the troops that have served our country in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade or two. When they come home, those who appreciate firearms purchase civilian-legal guns similar to the ones they carried in combat. They enjoy and promote the type of shooting that challenges those firearms.

Most of them didn't grow up hunting and shooting for practical reasons. Few indeed are those who have bumped off a skunk with a single-shot 12 gauge or wandered through frosty November woods in search of deer. Yesteryear's shooters were perhaps less cutting-edge, but they were far more practical because to them



You don't need to dress in tactical clothing with enough pockets to hide a Christmas tree and all the trimmings to be effective with a gun. Know your tools and use them with skill, but don't change your style and attitude just because you carry a gun.

a firearm was a tool. They protected livestock, filled the larder, and yes, protected themselves and their families with those tools.

Today, few shooters actually use their firearms for honestly practical purposes. Let me qualify that. Personal protection firearms could be said to be continually in use, in an on-call sort of capacity, though we hope and pray that we'll never have to make that call. What I mean by saying that few shooters actually use their gun in a practical sense is that, well, protecting the cabbage patch isn't exactly something many of us do these days. As a result, firearms have morphed from tools into recreational instruments in the minds of many.

I'm all for using firearms for recreational purposes. I do so personally and attempt to promote doing so with every opportunity. But I also attempt to instill in neophyte shooters a sense of respect and responsibility that enables and protects the fun they're having.

ANYWHERE THAT CONCEALED CARRY IS LEGAL, TACTICAL GARB SREAMS “GUN!” TO THOSE AROUND YOU.

Interestingly, there's a fundamental difference in gun-using rural folks, especially those with farms, livestock, or large gardens. Bluntly put, they've killed. Often, in the case of those with large flocks of sheep,

poultry, or—as in the case of Mr. McGregor of Peter Rabbit fame—cabbage patches: they've killed often. Although many of them are passionate hunters, much of that killing has been out of necessity, occurring while protecting their income and thereby their way of life.

Considered in that light—wherein the agricultural assets that support a way of life are protected from predators—one could say that rural folks actually employ guns in “personal protection” circumstances rather regularly. Whether those folks are an elderly couple weeding marauding rabbits out of their lettuce in southern Arizona, or an Alaska stockman shooting wolves out of his calves, they're employing their firearms for real purposes. They are killing. They know what it means to draw a bead on a living,

Wandering afield with a light-caliber handgun and plinking at targets of opportunity helps you learn to adapt to different situations.



breathing rib cage and squeeze a trigger. Use—real use—breeds respect.

Hunters, whether meat hunters or trophy hunters or, as is the case most of the time, a combination of the two, usually have similar experience to their credit. They've felt the extraordinary pressure of attempting to make a difficult shot under tricky circumstances. They've succeeded, and watched the life ebb from bodies, and they've failed, and watched their families go short of winter meat.

Though nothing can or should prepare the human mind for deliberately shooting to kill another human being, these folks—these farmers, gardeners, livestock-men, and hunters—have a better understanding of firearms, of their function as takers and providers of life, than do their urban counterparts. Don't take me wrong—I'm not saying that it's good or bad. I'm saying that there's simply less understanding present where guns are rarely put to use for practical purposes.

Rural dwellers often use their firearms in defense of home and garden—from destructive furry critters—and become comfortable and capable with them as a result.

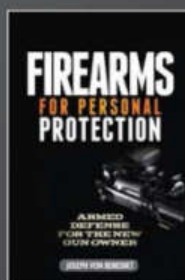


Pursue practical ability in firearms, as opposed to tactical ability. While being obsessed with perfecting the five-step draw is well and good, it's better yet to emulate your ancestors who lived with firearms as constant companions. Work on safety first, until keeping your finger off the trigger and your muzzle well controlled becomes pure muscle memory. Then work on proficiency, becoming so comfortable with your chosen firearms that loading and manipulating them is subconscious, allowing you to focus all your attention on any scenario unfolding around you, and to making a good shot should the situation deteriorate to that point.

Look at the world through different eyes. Don't report the dusty grade school kid trudging down the shoulder of the street with a bloody squirrel in one hand and a .22 rifle in the other—smile at him. If he needs help carrying that .22 safely, help him briefly and with positive encouragement. If not, keep your mouth shut—he probably knows more about guns than you do.

Carry your guns with mild intent. As a citizen, you're not being called upon to hold the tactical edge that will assist you in enforcing laws and upholding truth and justice. Your responsibility as a gun owner is to yourself and your family. Become good with your guns, and discrete with them as well. Show up at the local 3-gun shoot in shorts and a Hawaiian shirt, or Wranglers and cowboy boots. Always remember, it's not about what you use, it's how you use it.

Firearms kept the first settlers in the New World alive. They won our forefathers a nation of freedom. They've protected that freedom through numerous wars around the world, and they've fed and protected American families for centuries. Firearms are the primary tool of American independence. **MS**



This article is excerpted from "Firearms for Personal Protection," by Joseph von Benedikt, which offers common sense advice for personal protection. Use this code to get a 20% discount at the Gun Digest Store: **GUNS20**

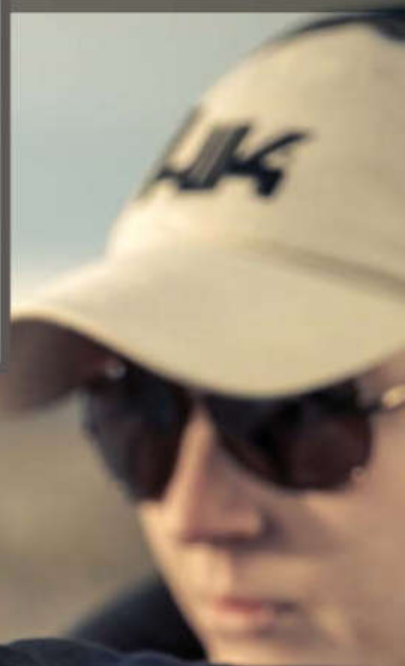
TACTICAL GUNS FOR SELF-DEFENSE

Use the tools operators depend on daily. Check out these great firearms for self-defense.

ROBERT A. SADOWSKI

IT'S KIND OF A NO-BRAINER TO CHOOSE

a tactical weapon to defend your family and home. These weapons—ARs, pistols and shotguns—have passed the test of time in battlefields and on city streets. Well-made and quality-built guns like these are the type you can depend on when the odds may not be in your favor. Will they give you an advantage in a gunfight? Yep, and there is nothing wrong with that. Here are a few guns I have on my short list that are as suitable for tactical operations as they are for home defense.





Wilson Combat Vickers Elite

Wilson Combat builds near-perfect 1911s, but when they teamed up with competitive shooter, industry consultant and trainer, Larry Vickers, they may have built the perfect 1911. Starting with Wilson Combat's precision-machined and hand-fitted forged slide and frame along with their match-grade barrel for impeccable reliability and precise accuracy, Vickers added a bobbed high-ride beavertail grip safety, round-butt magazine well and a special .45-caliber magazine. The Vickers Duty Magazine has a reinforced, solid tube for added strength, a newly engineered follower with sand cuts and a last-round retention feature. Pretty darn close to near perfect. (\$3,850; WilsonCombat.com)

H&K VP9

H&K has been a pioneer in developing polymer frame, striker-fired pistols since the 1960s. Its newest is the VP9, and it is one of the most ergonomic pistols available today. The modular grip features two different size backstraps and side panels offering 27 different combinations, so you can custom fit the pistol to your hand and shooting style. Plus, the VP9's controls are ambidextrous. Shoots the black out of targets, too. (\$719; HK-USA.com)

CALIBER: 9mm
BARREL: 4.0 inches
OVERALL LENGTH: 7.3 inches
WEIGHT: 25.5 ounces
GRIP: Modular, textures
FINISH: Matte black
CAPACITY: 15+1
MSRP: \$719

CALIBER: .45 ACP
BARREL: 5 inches
OVERALL LENGTH: 8.7 inches
WEIGHT: 37.9 ounces
GRIP: Checkered G10
FINISH: Matte black
CAPACITY: 8+1
MSRP: \$3,850



SIG P320 Full-Size

The ability to adapt to any situation is a major tenet of gunfighting. The P320 was built to adapt with interchangeable grip modules—small, medium, large—to provide the optimal grip circumference for any size hand. Plus, the pistol can be converted to fire multiple calibers—9mm, .40 S&W, .357 SIG, .45 ACP—so you can fire whatever ammo you have on hand or can find. The pistol uses a striker-fire system with a built in disconnect safety and striker safety, so controls are kept to a minimum and you can concentrate on a threat down-range. (\$650; SIGSauer.com)

CALIBER: 9mm
BARREL: 4.7 inches
OVERALL LENGTH: 8.0 inches
WEIGHT: 29.4 ounces
GRIP: Textured polymer
FINISH: Matte black
CAPACITY: 17+1
MSRP: \$650



Windham Weaponry

Partnering with Frank Procter, owner of the Way of the Gun firearms instruction school, Windham Weaponry configured an AR to create an excellent handling, accurate rifle. The full-length Picatinny rail allows an operator to mount an assortment of optic types to get the most out of the 16-inch medium-profile barrel, which is free floated in a MI 15-inch Key Mod hand-rail. Other premium components include BCM's Gunfighter MOD2 pistol grip and charging handle, Magpul MOE adjustable stock and CMC trigger. This gun is built to fight and defend. (\$1,795; WindhamWeaponry.com)



CALIBER: .223 Rem./5.56x45mm NATO

BARREL: 16 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 36.1 inches

WEIGHT: 6.93 pounds

STOCK: Magpul MOE

GRIP: BCM Gunfighter MOD2

HANDGUARD: Midwest Industries

SS Key MOD

FINISH: Matte black

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: \$1,795





NEMO Tango2

The Tango2 is a custom, lightweight AR-15 outfitted with components that make it good to go out of the box. The lower receiver is custom machined from 7075 billet aluminum and has a custom tiger stripe finish. The 16-inch 416 stainless barrel features an ionbond finish and is sheathed in a rifle-length free float KeyMod handguard. With Troy BUIS, a Geissele SSA-E two-stage trigger and Mission First Tactical Battle Link Collapsible stock, the Tango2 is well equipped to defend the homestead. (\$2,775; NEMOArms.com)

CALIBER: 5.56x45mm NATO

BARREL: 16 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 34 inches

WEIGHT: 7 pounds

STOCK: Mission First adjustable

GRIP: Hogue Overmold

HANDGUARD: Key mod rail

FINISH: Matte tiger stripe

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: \$2,775



Ruger SR-556 Takedown

Ruger takes tactical covert to new levels of concealment with the SR-556 Takedown, which breaks down into four components without tools. Remove the upper receiver from the lower receiver as you normally would, then remove the bolt carrier from the upper. The barrel can then be removed from the upper receiver by pulling down on two sliding latches, rotating the barrel and pulling it free from the handguard. The disassembled rifle neatly stows in a small knapsack for discreet carry. Plus, you can swap out calibers to .300 BLK with a simple barrel and magazine change. (\$2,049; Ruger.com)

CALIBER: .223 Rem./

5.56x45mm NATO

BARREL: 16.1 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 36 inches

WEIGHT: 7.6 pounds

STOCK: Magpul MOE SL

GRIP: Magpul MOE

HANDGUARD: Quad rail

FINISH: Matte black

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: \$2,049

Black Rain Ordnance BRO-PG3-PISTON

This totally US-made AR-15 rifle is the exception rather than the norm when it comes to AR rifles. All components in BRO rifles are manufactured by BRO—except for the obvious parts like the furniture and magazine. This way BRO can fully control the quality of their rifles. The PG3-PISTON model also uses the proven Adams Arms piston system, which keeps the internal receiver and all the moving parts cleaner and cooler than the traditional gas-impingement system. (\$2,779; BlackRainOrdnance.com)

CALIBER: .223 Rem./5.56x45mm NATO

BARREL: 16 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 33 inches

WEIGHT: 7.2 pounds

STOCK: Magpul UBR

GRIP: Magpul MOE

HANDGUARD: Quad rail

FINISH: Silver Skulls anodized

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: \$2,779



Colt LE6920MPS-B

The AR bloodline began with Colt, and the LE6920MPS-B is the latest evolution of the battle-proven design outfitted with Magpul furniture: MOE buttstock, pistol grip, hand guard and vertical grip. The rifle comes with open sights—the rear folds—plus it is optic-ready with a full Picatinny rail. Direct impingement as it was meant to be. (\$1,049; Colt.com)

CALIBER: .223 Rem./5.56x45mm NATO

BARREL: 16.1 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 35.5 inches

WEIGHT: 6.9 pounds

STOCK: Magpul MOE


GRIP: Magpul MOE

HANDGUARD: Magpul MOE rail

FINISH: Matte black

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: \$1,049



Mossberg 590A1 Magpul Series

It is not just the 9+1 round capacity of the 590A1 that makes it one of the most popular shotguns with LE and the Military. This shotgun is a workhorse with experience on the street and the battlefield. The Magpul series brings the design fully into the 21st century, featuring a Magpul SGA buttstock with modular cheek rest and adjustable LOP, plus a Magpul forend. It also offers XS ghost ring sights, a heavy walled barrel for heavy-duty use and has a parkerized finish so it is impervious to the elements. (\$855; Mossberg.com)

GAUGE: 12

BARREL: 20 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 39.5 inches

WEIGHT: 7.25 pounds

STOCK: Magpul SGA

FINISH: Matte black

CAPACITY: 9+1

MSRP: \$855

Remington Model 870 Express Tactical with Blackhawk Spec Ops II

The Remington Model 870 12 gauge pump shotgun is a mainstay of many LE agencies around the country. It is a proved platform with millions of 870s manufactured and in use. The Model 870 Express Tactical with Blackhawk Spec Ops II uses the Blackhawk adjustable stock which can be customized to any shooters stature with seven LOP adjustments plus it employs a recoil reduction system. This model features an enhanced pistol grip and SuperCell recoil pad to take the bite out of the 12 gauge recoil. (Remington.com; 800-243-9700) **MS**

GAUGE: 12

BARREL: 18 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 38.5 inches

WEIGHT: 7 pounds

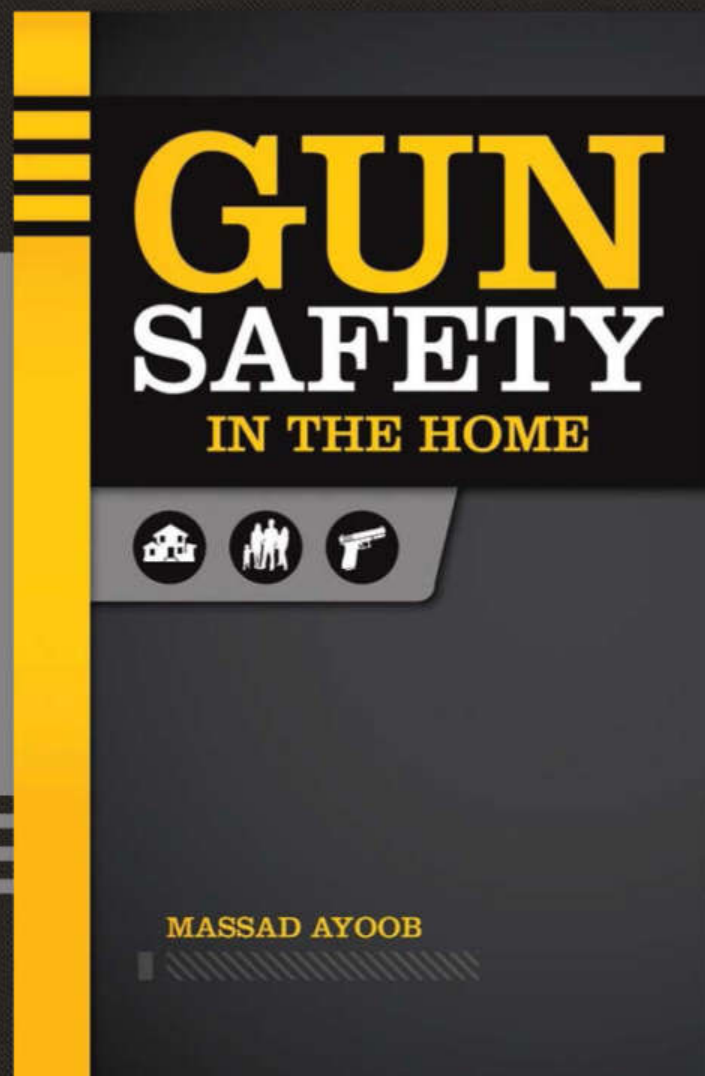
STOCK: Blackhawk Spec Ops II

FINISH: Matte black

CAPACITY: 7+1

MSRP: \$638

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FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROCK

Rock River knows how to get the party started with its new X-1 in .300 BLK.

ERIC CONN



Building off the success of previous models, the LAR-300 X-1 brings a whole lot of features to the .300 BLK party. Photo by Jeff Jones

While the .300 AAC Blackout has continued to grow in popularity among shooters, the new LAR-300 X-1 rifle from Rock River Arms takes the cartridge to a whole new level of performance. As an amalgamation of former models and concepts, including the Fred Eichler Series LAR-15, the X-1 brings together the best features from Rock River's past and yet is a beast of its own kind. The X-1 has existed in 5.56 NATO for a few years now, but the jump into the .300 BLK chambering figures to be another huge leap forward for the X Series of rifles.

What makes the LAR-300 X-1 stand out is the 18-inch fluted and bead blasted, stainless steel, cryo treated barrel and the Rock River Operator A2 buttstock and TRO-XL handguard, which come in either

ROCK RIVER LAR-300 X-1

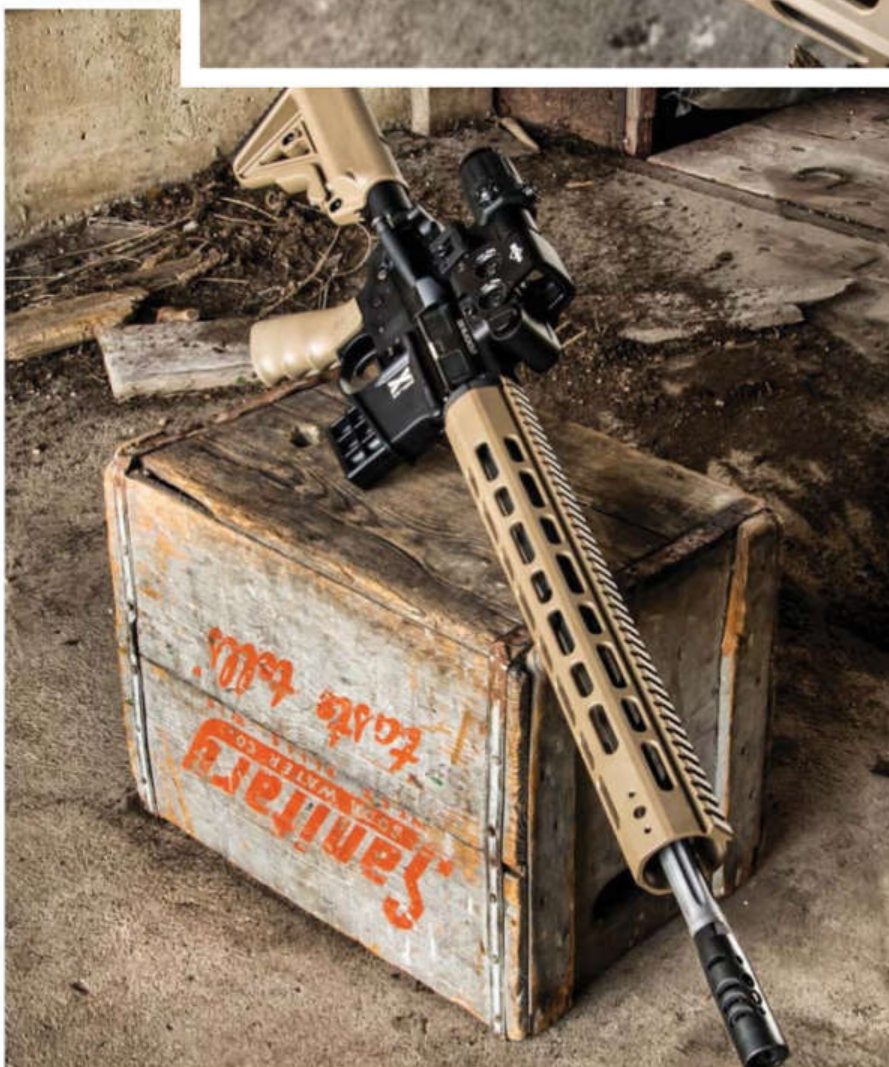
Manufacturer	Rock River Arms; RockRiverArms.com
Type	Direct-impingement, semi-automatic
Caliber	.300 BLK
Barrel	18-inch fluted, bead blasted, stainless steel, cryo treated
Handguard	RRA TRO-XL extended length, free float
Stock	RRA Operator A2 fixed or RRA Operator CAR adjustable
Grip	Hogue rubberized grip
Trigger	RRA two-stage
Overall Length	38.5" (A2 stock)/36.5 (CAR stock)
Weight	7.9 pounds
MSRP	\$1,585

tan or black finishes. The tan-finished rifle comes standard with a fixed buttstock and is ideally suited for hunting, while the black rifle comes with the adjustable CAR buttstock, though both rifles can be purchased with either option. Not only does it look slick, the fluted, stainless steel barrel is durable and highly accurate, producing groups in our 100-yard testing that are very respectable for the cartridge—Nosler's Match Grade 125-grain load produced a best group of .81 inches, while Hornady's 110-grain V-MAX constricted to .59 inches. The LAR-300 X-1 comes with either the Hunter muzzle break (tan model) or the Beast (black), both of which feature a 5/8-24 threading. Rock River's two-stage trigger, which is among the best as far as AR-type triggers go, also improves accuracy. The break is crisp and the reset audible. The trigger guard is extended to make room for gloved hands and winter shooting conditions—a particularly nice touch for those predator hunters among us.

The TRO-XL handguard is ergonomically designed to fit the contour of your hand or shooting sticks and features a single, full-length Picatinny rail at the 12 o'clock position. Cutouts in the handguard help reduce weight without giving you the jagged feel of a quadrail. The rail continues along the upper receiver, making plenty of room for a massive—and massively impressive—optic like Steiner's M5Xi in 5-25x56mm, which is mostly overkill for the .300 BLK but provides maximum accuracy nonetheless. For the

The LAR-300 X1 comes with one of two Rock River muzzle brakes: the Hunter (shown here) or the Beast, which comes standard on the black rifle.

Photo by Jeff Jones



Not only is the LAR-300 X Series rifle performance machine, it's also incredibly slick to look at. All for under \$1,600? You better believe it. *Photo by Jeff Jones.*



review, the M5Xi was secured with Burris' P.E.P.R. mount, which attaches or detaches easily and quickly. With German glass, reticle illumination and true 25x magnification, the M5Xi is as durable and optically crisp as they come. Most of the shooting done for review was conducted with an EOTech HHS II with G33.STS magnifier, which is an ideal pair for close quarters work, be it coyote, hog, steel targets or paper silhouettes.

The LAR-300 X-1 comes with forged upper and lower receivers and an "X Series" emblem on the ejection side of the lower receiver. The upper receiver comes with a forward assist and Rock River Star safety, as well as a Hogue rubberized pistol grip. The rifle is relatively heavy for an AR-15-type platform, weighing in at 8 pounds, but the additional weight also helps stabilize the shot—ideal for predator hunting and overall accuracy.



ALL BLACKED OUT

The LAR-300 is chambered in .300 BLK, which was developed originally by J.D. Jones as the .300 Whisper and standardized by Advanced Armament Corporation (AAC) in 2009. The cartridge has the capacity to produce smaller bullets at supersonic velocities or heavier bullets at subsonic velocities. Subsonic velocities usually hover near 1,000 fps, while supersonic loads usually come out at about 2,100 to 2,300 fps and produce



The .300 BLK isn't known for its accuracy at 100 yards, but the LAR-300 X-1 performed beyond expectations. Photo by Jeff Jones

generally better accuracy out to 100 yards. The great upside of the .300 BLK, however, is the ability to suppress the rifle and send out lethal .30-caliber bullets at close distances, either for military-type applications or close-range hunting—hogs, deer and so on. Folks often complain about the lack of performance at ranges greater than 100 yards, but the reality is that the .300 BLK is purpose-built for close quarters work. In that capacity, it does very well.

Paired with a suppressor like SilencerCo's new titanium Omega, the .300 BLK is devastating on close-range critters, whether you're trying to eradicate hogs, take out a pesky coyote or cull deer in South Texas. Short, light and quiet, SilencerCo's Omega is designed with a Specwar ASR muzzle brake and anchor brake to help reduce recoil. Not only is the Omega great for the .300 BLK, making in- or over-the-ear hearing protection unnecessary, it fits any caliber from 5.7mm to

PERFORMANCE

MANUFACTURER	AVG VELOCITY (fps)	AVG GROUP (in.)	BEST GROUP (in.)
SIG Sauer Elite Performance, 220-gr. Subsonic	1,000	2.44	2.20
Nosler Match Grade 125-gr. BT	2,250	1.25	.81
Hornady 110-gr. V-Max	2,350	1.33	.59

Data taken from five, three-shot groups from a bench at 100 yards.



The Steiner M5Xi in 5-25x56mm offers incredible optical clarity and a performance machine and is built to last. *Photo by Jeff Jones*

.300 Win. Mag. On a recent cull deer hunt in South Texas at Mellon Creek Outfitters near Refugio, Texas, the combo of Omega and .300 BLK were extremely efficient at close-range culling. Rather than scattering after a shot, most of the deer and hogs stay put, allowing for additional follow up shots. Firing shots from a truck—without additional hearing protection—was routine and pain free. Similarly, the LAR-300 X-1 would do well pulling double duty as a home defense gun; paired with a can, it's extremely easy on the ears in confined quarters that would otherwise leave the ears ringing for days.

PERFORMANCE

In the accuracy department, the X-1 performed well, especially for caliber. The .300 BLK isn't typically the most accurate cartridge at 100 yards, but both Nosler and Hornady loads (both supersonic) produced best groups well under an inch. Subsonic loads are less accurate at 100 yards, but still under 2 inches and more than suitable for hunting or self defense purposes—especially considering the cartridge was designed more for the 0-50 yard range, or closer. While in the past there haven't been great options for the .300 BLK, there are now more quality loads than ever. Nosler's Match

Grade loads, as well as Hornady's 110-grain V-MAX, were among those that performed best in our testing. Beyond that, Noveske, SilencerCo and SIG—to name a few—all produce quality loadings for the cartridge.

PARTING SHOTS

The .300 BLK is as popular as ever, and the LAR-300 X-1 is as fine a rifle as you'll find in that chambering. Rock River's AR builds are superb, and they come in at a price that's quite reasonable (starting at \$1,585). The rifle comes fully loaded with a Rock River two-stage trigger that's at the top of its game. Suppressor-ready with a great barrel, the LAR-300 X-1 is tough to beat. It's not a 200-yard, big game gun, but then it was never designed to be. Within the limits of its intended purpose, the X-1 chambered in .300 BLK is extremely proficient. **MS**

THE AUTHOR: Eric Conn is a former sports journalist from Colorado. He is an avid hunter, shooter and outdoorsman, and loves spending time in the backcountry. He is the proud father of three wild boys, husband of one lovely wife.

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EXTRA TERRÉS



TRIAL

CMMG's new pistol version of the Mk47 Mutant effectively splices the DNA of the AR-15 and the AK-47 into one compact, lead-slinging hybrid.

DUSTY GIBSON



It may look like an AR, but it feeds from AK mags. Photo by Dusty Gibson



The Mk47's bolt carrier group looks similar to the AR's but uses a larger bolt face with oversized locking lugs. Photo by Dusty Gibson

Age-old debates surrounding firearms, such as the one between AR-15 and AK-47, will probably never go away, but a new gun aims to present a peaceful resolution to those timeless disputes. Bridging the gap between caliber wars and platform loyalties, the CMMG Mk47 Mutant offers a unique hybrid design that links the genius of Eugene Stoner and Mikhail Kalashnikov into a single firearm.

Originally offered in a full-length rifle variation with a 16-inch barrel, the 7.62x39mm Mutant landed in late 2014 equipped with the gas operation and ergonomics of an AR-15, combined with the ammo compatibility of an AK-47. With the naked eye, everything about the gun screams AR-15 until the caliber and magazine come into focus.

Riding on the success of its full-size, extra terrestrial Mutant mother ship, CMMG is now offering a pistol variant of the Mk47 with a 10-inch barrel.

Why a pistol, you might ask? Pistols need not be registered with the BATFE as short-barreled rifles, therefore eliminating a \$200 tax stamp and a multi-month waiting period. They are also legal to own and hunt with in a large number of states. In many states, having a concealed carry license allows the carrying of loaded Mk47 pistols in a vehicle, making this an ideal truck gun. Given those reasons, there's no question why the 10-inch Mutant pistol might actually be more appealing to own than the full-size model. But the Mutant pistol's curb appeal isn't limited to how it slashes

through red tape, but rather how it offers the best of both worlds in a single package.

AK-47 fans may wonder, "Why not just buy an AK-47 pistol?" First, the Mutant's familiar ergonomic controls derived from the AR-15 are a huge appeal for many shooters. Second, it features a number of standardized AR parts, such as the fire control group, that are often easier to find at local stores than AK parts. Third, thanks to its direct-impingement gas system, suppressing the Mutant is also far easier than trying to stick a can on an AK. Fourth, the Mk47 has ample rail space to accommodate your choice of sights, scopes, lasers or other attachments. It's also made in the USA.

AR-15 fans may wonder, "Why not just buy an AR-15 pistol?" Mainly, bulk ammo availability of the 7.62x39mm cartridge often far exceeds that of .223 Rem/5.56 NATO. The .30-caliber cartridge is known to hit harder and make a larger hole than a .223, which is why many states approve the Russian cartridge for hunting. The Mutant can also throw some impressive fireballs, giving it points for the pure "cool factor."

PERFORMANCE

Of course, combining pieces of two iconic firearms into a single, effective system means nothing if the gun doesn't perform reliably.

During testing, the Mutant pistol ate up hundreds of rounds without a mechanical hiccup. CMMG designed the Mutant's guts to stand up against heavy usage. Its bolt carrier group is derived from the AR-15 platform,

CMMG MK47

Manufacturer	CMMG
Model	Mk47 "Mutant" Pistol
Caliber	7.62x39mm
Operation	Direct Gas-Impingement Semi-Auto
Weight	6lbs. (unloaded)
Overall Length	26.5 in.
Barrel	10 in., 1:10 twist
Muzzle	5/8"-24 SV muzzle brake
Receivers	Billet 7075 T6 Aluminum
Trigger	7.5-pound single stage (measured with Lyman Digital Trigger Gauge)
Handguard	9" free float, KeyMod
MSRP	\$1,499
Website	CMMGInc.com



The Mk47 pistol works well with a pistol brace or a sling for support. Notice the lack of a forward assist. Photo by Dusty Gibson

incorporating a bolt face with oversized locking lugs that look like they came off a battle tank. The result is a sturdy reciprocating mass more than capable of reliably cycling the 7.62x39mm cartridge.

With extra reciprocating mass typically comes greater recoil, but CMMG tamed the Mutant pistol with a carbine-length gas system to bleed the gas through a longer tube and reduce recoil. Combine this with an aggressive muzzle brake that throws flames like an angry dragon, and the Mutant's recoil can be described as a gentle thump. Those who have ever fired a supersonic .300 Blackout through an AR-15 platform will know what to expect from the 7.62x39mm Mutant.

One area where the Mutant comes up short for AR-15 aficionados is surely in the absence of a

bolt release lever or forward assist. The Mutant also does not lock the bolt to the rear on an empty magazine. Each of those characteristics are part of the Mutant's AK-47 influence, hence the hybrid design. Additionally, the included Magpul 25-round AK PMAGs feed very reliably, but their polymer feed lips quickly show signs of wear and tear that you wouldn't experience with metallic magazines.

Some people may question the accuracy of a 10-inch barrel, but testing showed that the Mutant delivers very acceptable group sizes. Using a non-magnified EOTech XPS 2-1, the author was able to achieve a 1.72-inch group at 100 yards. Extending the range out to 600 yards was also not an issue, though greater magnification with a 3x magni-

The Mutant lacks a bolt release lever and uses the AK's paddle-style mag release.

Photo by Dusty Gibson



When paired with a laser sight, such as the LaserLyte Center Mass, the Mk47 becomes an even more formidable home defense firearm.

Photo by Dusty Gibson



ACCURACY

Avg. Group 2.28 inches

Best Group 1.72 inches

VELOCITY

Avg. Velocity 2,016 feet per second

Std. Dev 12.07

All data obtained with five 5-shot groups of Winchester 123-grain 7.62x39mm FMJ at 100 yards with EOTech XPS2-1.

fier would significantly improve its maximum effective range. For a gun that's geared toward defensive situations and shooting range pleasure, the Mutant leaves little to be desired in terms of accuracy.

Shooting the Mutant at nighttime revealed that aliens really do come out after dark. Fireballs from the Mk47 reached several feet on each side of the muzzle, momentarily illuminating the desert in all directions like an alien aircraft. Flame throwing was to be expected with a rifle cartridge firing through a 10-inch barrel, as un-burnt powder ignited outside the barrel.

PARTING SHOTS

CMMG one-upped itself with the pistol variation of the Mk47 Mutant. In fact, the pistol version is likely a more practical choice than the rifle. Its shorter barrel

makes it very maneuverable in tight places, such as a vehicle, without sacrificing enough ballistic performance to make a difference for most users.

Those intending to use the Mutant pistol as a home defense gun in low-light situations should consider trading the muzzle brake for a flash hider or suppressor to avoid excessive muzzle flash, which temporarily reduces your night vision.

For a gun that accepts some of the most readily available and affordable rifle ammunition, the CMMG Mk47 Mutant offers an appealing hybrid design that's inviting to both the AR and the AK crowd. There's no doubt it'll turn heads on the range and become a favorite piece in any collection that offers equal parts functionality and pure cool factor. **MS**

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DON'T BLINK!

Beretta's new 1301 Tactical shotgun is a fast shooting, surgical brawler perfect for home defense and law enforcement applications.

ROBERT A. SADOWSKI

“SHOTGUNS ARE BRUTAL, HUNGRY WEAPONS,”

explained Steve Fisher at Beretta's first Tactical Summit held at Academi in Moyock, North Carolina. He then proceeded to quickly stuff a Beretta 1301 Tactical shotgun with Federal 00 Buck faster than a snake crossing hot asphalt in July. At 25 yards, you can predict the hits as Fisher unloads, creating a pile of empty shells and fist-size splashes on the painted steel target. “Let's move back a bit,” he said, reloading.

At 30, 40 and 50 yards, Fisher fired, keeping all nine pellets on the 18x1-inch steel target. At 75 yards, not all pellets hit steel, but the demonstration proved the surgical accuracy of Beretta's 1301 Tactical shotgun.

Shotguns are not weapons to be pointed, as some may think, in the general direction of the target and fired in the expectation the target will be perforated with a swath of 00 pellets. The Beretta 1301, paired with a modern tactical load like the Federal Personal Defense shell, needs to be aimed—and wants to be aimed—so those nine pellets hit the target precisely where you want them to go.

A shotgun is “brutal” in the sense that, when well deployed, it can ravage a target with the intensity of nine 9mm bullets hitting at the same time; also a 12-gauge shotgun has noticeable recoil. It's “hungry” in the sense that a shotgun is loaded one round at a time. Unlike an AR, which can be quickly topped off with a fresh 30-round magazine, or a pistol, which may get 15 to 17 rounds with each reload, a shotgun always needs to be reloaded with the operator feeding the machine.

The Beretta 1301 Tactical shotgun uses Beretta's BLINK gas operating system with a cross tube gas piston. According to John Tamborino, tactical product manager at Beretta, “The 1301 Tactical cycles 36 percent faster than other semi-automatic shotguns,” which means you can get off four rounds in one second. Don't blink or you'll miss the show. “The BLINK system has been around for a few years and is the same proven system found in Beretta's A400 hunting and competition semi-automatic shotguns,” Tamborino added.

Using the 1301 in Moyock as well as

back home, I ran it hard and had no issues with the shotgun performing even when feeding it a mixed diet of light reloads and factory ammunition. The Beretta was completely reliable.

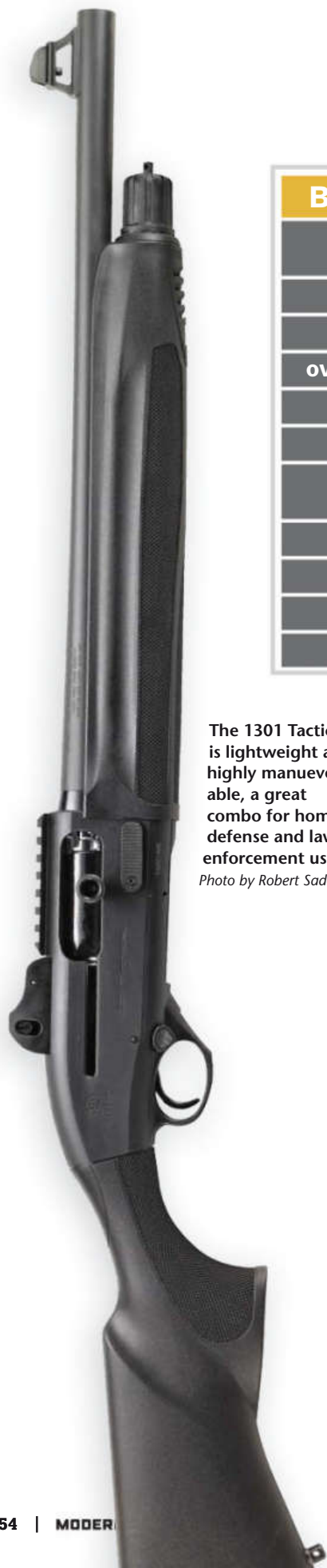
“The BLINK gas system,” explained Tamborino, “was designed to cycle most shotgun loads, from light bird-shot all the way to slugs, and the gas system also has a self-cleaning design,” which means the piston's seal is designed to scrape powder residue as it cycles. Even after extensive shooting, the gun had little fouling.

The 1301 Tactical chambers both 2¾-inch and 3-inch shells. The receiver is lightweight aluminum. The triangular safety button located just forward of the trigger, the bolt handle and the bolt release are all oversized for fast manipulation even with gloved hands. The butt stock is synthetic with a grippy texture.

Knowing the 1301 might be used by kitted up law enforcement or petite home defenders, the length of



The Beretta 1301 Tactical cycles incredibly fast due to its BLINK gas operating system, which allows for easy rapid firing. Photo by Robert Sadowski



The 1301 Tactical is lightweight and highly maneuverable, a great combo for home defense and law enforcement uses.

Photo by Robert Sadowski

BERETTA 1301 TACTICAL	
CALIBER	12-ga., 2.75-3 in. chamber
BARREL	18.5 in.
CHOKE	Fixed cylinder
OVERALL LENGTH	37.8 in.
WEIGHT	6.3 lbs.
STOCK	Black synthetic
SIGHTS	Adjustable ghost ring/Picatinny rail
ACTION	Semi-automatic
FINISH	Matte black
CAPACITY	4 + 1
MSRP	\$1,059

pull (LOP) on the 1301 is only 13 inches. Spacers are shipped with the 1301 so you can customize the LOP to your stature. A soft rubber recoil pad eases any felt recoil. The forend is thin and textured, offering users with small or large hands a good grasp, which is especially important in a fast shooting 12-gauge. The shotgun weighs a lithe 6.3 pounds unloaded. It is fast handling. Lightweight in a 12-gauge

tactical shotgun is not necessarily a good thing: That sense of brutal force can be felt in the shoulder, but I found the 1301 Tactical quite a sweet shotgun to shoot. The action was smooth and, along with the gas piston operating system, helped to alleviate any felt recoil. “Proper shooting technique” as Fisher said, “can also reduce felt recoil from the equation. In the firing position, use your hands to slightly pull in opposite directions, as if you were trying to pull the shotgun apart. Not enough to cause you to go off target but just enough so that when the weapon fires the recoil force will feel even less on your shoulder and cheek weld.” Lined up at 25 yards, we were drilled to load increasingly more rounds into the 1301 and fire. As the person to your left fired, it was your turn to load and start firing. On it went down the line until the pace was frenetic and the 1301s were fully loaded and fully emptied. We were firing light target loads, and the push-pull technique Fisher demonstrated helped remove any bite of recoil users might feel, though I thought the

PERFORMANCE	
BUCKSHOT	PATTERN
Winchester Mil-Spec 00 Buck/9 pellets	10
Federal Personal Defense 00 Buck/9 pellets	4.0
SLUGS	ACCURACY
Winchester Super X Rifled Slug, 1 oz.	3.0
Federal Tactical Hydra-Shok HP Rifled Slug, 1 oz	2.7

Buckshot patterns in inches at 25 yards; slug accuracy in inches for five, three-shot groups at 50 yards.

1301 had little felt recoil to begin with. Smaller stature shooters and those unfamiliar with shotguns might disagree, but I heard no complaints from the other shooters on the line.

"The barrels on the 1301 are cold hammer forged, back bored and vacuum distended, which does reduce recoil," said Tamborino. An adjustable ghost ring rear sight is paired up with a front blade with a white dot protected by wings. A Picatinny rail is mounted should a user want to add a red dot or reflex sight. A fixed cylinder choke is optimized for a variety of defense loads. The barrel is 18.5 inches in length, giving the shotgun an overall length of 37.8 inches. This length makes the 1301 quite maneuverable in a home defense situation, and it makes pie-ing corners easier in cramped environments.

The 1301 comes apart simply. Lock the breech bolt back; then unscrew the forend cap. Pull the forend off and pull the barrel from the receiver. To remove the breech bolt, place your finger on the bolt face and press the bolt-release button. Remember to control the breech bolt. Then pull the bolt handle from the breech bolt. The breech bolt and operating rods with the sleeve can then be removed from the front of the receiver and off the magazine tube. To access the trigger group, punch out the trigger-guard retaining pin, then press the bolt-release button and pull down on the trigger group assembly. It will pivot out the bottom of the receiver. This takes longer to explain than to actually do. Suffice it to say the process is user friendly.

Loading a semi-auto shotgun can be hard on fingers and thumbs, but the 1301 made it fast, enjoyable work since the edges of the loading port are smooth with no sharp edges. Shells slid easily into the magazine tube with no hitches.

Back home at the range, I warmed up the 1301 with some light handloads and fired them for speed. I doubt I fired four rounds in one second, but I did have a stream of empties flowing from the ejection port. Even running the shotgun full bore, the Beretta was



The Beretta 1301 Tactical features an oversized safety, bolt handle and bolt release for easy operation with gloves. Photo by Robert Sadowski

easy to control and recoil was manageable. Moving on to military grade 00 Buck, I found patterns measured about 10 inches at 25 yards. The Federal Personal Defense loads, however, gave me fist-size groups at 25 yards. It was accurate and surgical on center of mass and headshots. At 50 yards, I shouldered some slugs, shooting three-shot groups. Surgical again. The Federal Tactical slugs gave me 3-inch groups when I used a rest and did my part with the trigger. The trigger's pull weight was about 5 pounds with a slight bit of creep but was well suited for a tactical/defense weapon.

Though Beretta is more known for competition and hunting models, Tamborino said, "the inspiration with the 1301 tactical was to offer LE and home defenders a lightweight semi-auto tactical shotgun capable of cycling shotgun loads ranging from light to heavy." From my experience running all types of tactical shotguns, the Beretta 1301 Tactical is the kind of shotgun I want close at hand when things turn bad. Reliability and ease of use make this brutal beast an asset. **MS**

THE AUTHOR: Robert Sadowski is a contributing editor and writer for several firearms magazines and is the author of the *Shooter's Bible Guide to Combat Handguns* and the *Shooter's Bible Guide to Firearms Assembly, Disassembly, and Cleaning*.

BUDGET BATTLE RIFLE

Century Arms has revived and reimagined the classic HK G3 and has made it available at an affordable price.

JIM GRANT



“AFFORDABLE .308” SOUNDS LIKE AN OXYMORON.

From ammo to magazines and the firearms that use them, the .308 Winchester is a cartridge normally reserved for those with deep coffers. This is doubly true if the rifle in question is roller-delayed. In response, Century Arms decided to make both of these affordable to the masses with the introduction of their new C308 battle rifle.

Based on the Spanish CETME rifle that later became the HK G3 series of rifles, the C308 is a roller-delayed, magazine-fed, semi-automatic rifle chambered in .308 Win. Like an AR-15, the C308 receiver consists of two portions, an upper and lower. The upper receiver is constructed from steel stampings, while the lower is built from high-impact polymer. The C308 feeds from detachable box-type magazines available in capacities ranging from 5 to 50 rounds, and it ships with two. One is a five-round steel magazine for bench shooting, and the other is an aluminum 20-round HK surplus mag.

Shooters looking for additional magazines are in for a treat: The C308 uses some of the most affordable magazines on the planet. Surplus steel mags are normally found for under \$5, and aluminum mags for even less. This is unusual, since the CETME rifle the C308 is based upon doesn't actually use G3 magazines.

The C308 isn't truly a CETME or G3 clone, but a hybrid of the two. Century modified the design slightly to accept both Mil-Spec G3 magazines and G3 furniture. A brilliant move, as it greatly reduces the cost of ownership while simultaneously granting users access to the robust aftermarket parts selection for the G3 rifle. With this added modularity, the first of the two major financial hurdles associated with the platform are circumvented. The other? Mounting optics.

Unlike modern AR-15 carbines and other modern firearms designed, HK-pattern rifles (especially older models like the G3) were produced at a time when optics were reserved for snipers. Consequently, mounting optics on a G3 or CETME receiver was an afterthought, and it requires a special claw mount.

These mounts are often pricey and

unnecessarily add to the platform's cost of ownership. Century's solution mirrored those of other successful stateside HK-pattern builders: It welded an optics rail to the top of the receiver—a simple, yet ingenious solution with unrivalled durability.

This welded rail segment lies just ahead of the rear sight, which is the first indication that the C308 isn't a true G3 rifle. Most HK-pattern rifles utilize a rotating drum rear sight combined with a front sight post protected by a hood. While unique in construction, the pair function like those found on AR-15 carbines or any aperture-sighted firearm.

In lieu of the complex rotating drum sight, the Century C308 uses a simple multi-leaf sight with three different options. One is a notch for fast target acquisition at close range, the other two are aperture type peeps for more precise work; each aperture is zeroed for a different distance.

Despite its simplicity, the rear sight functions well and makes engaging targets at range a simple matter



The C308's upper is built from steel stampings; the lower is made of high-impact polymer. The rifle also has a welded rail segment for optics. Photos by Jim Grant



of aligning the sights and slowly squeezing the trigger. Good thing, too, since this rifle is incredibly enjoyable to shoot—even if the ergonomics of the rifle are geared toward larger shooters.

The C308 ships with a full-size, fixed G3 polymer stock that has a substantial length of pull. Here is another example of why it's great Century chose a standardized design. Because the C308 can use G3 furniture, this opens up several options that allow shooters to fit

the rifle to them. Shorter individuals should invest in either an M4 adapter or a G3A4 telescopic stock.

Other ergonomic concerns involve the fire control system and the magazine release position. Both are less than ideal for shooters with small hands. More diminutive shooters can still manipulate these controls, but they'll have to shift their grip to do so. Even still, with a bit of training or a few aftermarket parts, these issues can be circumvented.

PERFORMANCE

MANUFACTURER	AVG VELOCITY (fps)	BEST GROUP (in.)	AVG GROUP (in.)
HOTSHOT Elite 146gr FMJ	2,415	2.9	3.53
Winchester 168gr HPBT Match King	2,231	1.43	1.5
Hornady Superformance Match 178gr BTHP A-MAX	2,315	1.3	1.39

Performance testing occurred from a bench rest at 100 yards.



Despite using the potent .308 Win., the combination of smooth-cycling, roller-delayed action and substantial weight does a great job at dampening felt recoil.

Another aspect that assists in recoil reduction is the Century-made compensator. Shooters familiar with Century's all-American Centurion rifle will recognize the muzzle device that ships on the C308. While the intermediate-power 7.62x39mm cartridge hardly needed any recoil reduction, the stout round fired by the C308 greatly benefits from it.

Shooters not enamored with Century's muzzle brake can use any AR-10-style brake that uses 5/8x24-inch threading. This was confirmed during the test when several muzzle devices were successfully mounted and utilized on the C308. The two most effective devices for reducing recoil are the SilencerCo MAAD brake and the SilencerCo Saker 762 sound suppressor. Both substantially reduced felt recoil but also shifted the rifle's weight towards the muzzle, slowing the time to get on target.

Accuracy testing was initially done at 100 yards where the C308 proved better than combat accurate. Given the power of its cartridge, the test was extended to 350 yards against steel silhouette targets. Equipped with a fixed magnification 6x scope, the C308 effortlessly put all rounds on target against an 18-inch steel gong.

It showed better accuracy with Winchester 168-grain Match ammo than the others tested, with Hornady's TAP coming in at a close second. All ammo tested ran 100 percent, ranging from Silver Bear nickel-cased ammo and Wolf steel-cased FMJ to Hornady TAP and

CENTURY ARMS C308

Manufacturer	Century Arms; CenturyArms.biz
Type	Roller-delayed blowback, semi-automatic
Caliber	7.62 NATO/.308 Win.
Barrel	18 in.
Overall Length	40.2 in.
Weight	8 pounds
Muzzle Device	Century Chevron muzzle brake, 5/8x24 RH muzzle threads
Stock	Fixed, G3-style
Trigger	Standard G3/CETME rifle trigger
MSRP	\$699

Winchester Match. In total, 300 rounds were fired without issue.

Conceptually, the C308 seems like a rifle without a market; people who can afford .308 Win. can also afford quality rifles to fire them. Shooters longing to scratch the battle rifle itch can afford a reloading setup or simply more ammunition by purchasing the C308 over more expensive designs. Given the rifle's reliability and accuracy, buyers would be hard pressed to find a more affordable option that comes anywhere close to the C308's capabilities. **MS**

THE AUTHOR: Jim Grant is a freelance writer and photographer who loves all things 2nd Amendment. When not hiking with his wife and dog, he is collecting or shooting both historical and tactical firearms. If it shoots, Jim wants it.





COMPETITION BRED

Loaded with race-ready features, the Armalite M-15 3-Gun rifle is born and bred for the winner's circle.

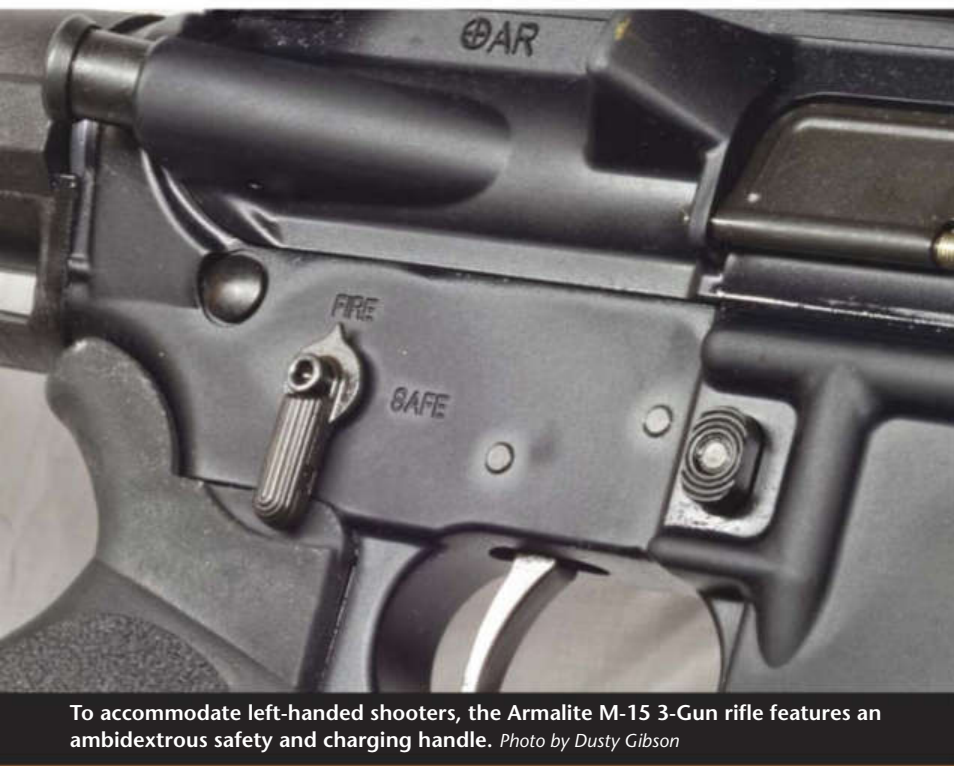
DUSTY GIBSON

The new kid on the block of shooting sports, 3-gun competition requires specialized equipment that is already evolving at run-and-gun speed.

Keeping a close eye on the booming popularity of the sport, gun and gear manufacturers who once tip-toed around 3-gun specific products are now running into the ring with their gloves off. As a result, those manufacturers are making it easier than ever to get involved in the sport. Getting started in 3-gun demands so much equipment that one might need to buy a bigger truck to haul it around with. Now, shooters can purchase race-ready gear that's factory designed for the user to simply pull out of the box and get going.

When it comes to Armalite's new M-15 3-gun rifle, every inch of this compact carbine is custom-tailored for optimal performance in competition. From its single-stage Timney trigger to its tunable muzzle brake and gas block, this rifle means business.

While Armalite may be new to the 3-gun game, anyone who knows that the "AR" in AR-15 stands for Armalite rather than "assault rifle" should know that the Illinois-based company has more than 60 years of firearm innovations under its belt. Now it's packing that experience into a rifle with a 13.5-inch stainless steel barrel that's easily capable of shooting sub-MOA groups or plinking steel at 400 plus yards.



THE LION'S MANE

Take a closer look at each component of this rifle and it's obvious how Armalite's innovative instinct is influencing a transformation in the specialized equipment used for 3-gun competition.

With an overall length of just 34.5 inches, the M-15 3-gun is about 4 inches shorter than typical run-and-gun rifles. Its shorter profile allows shooters to wield the rifle faster around obstacles or through tight courses of fire. So how does Armalite stay at the 16-inch NFA threshold but still remain short? The answer lies in a 13.5-inch barrel that has a 2.5-inch long pinned and welded Armalite tunable muzzle brake, bringing the barrel exactly to the 16-inch "street legal" mark.

Saving 4 inches might not sound like much, but the size and weight reduction is a huge advantage when a course of fire requires quick movements and smooth transitions between left- and right-handed target engagements.

As far as ambidexterity, the M-15 3-Gun was designed with righties and lefties in mind, though it does favor righties. Left-handers still deal with right-handed case ejection and standard bolt and magazine releases. However, an ambidextrous safety selector and Raptor charging handle play no favorites, and an over molded Hogue grip invites all shooters.

Armalite has also engineered and manufactured an innovative handguard that's easy on the hands without sacrificing the ability to attach accessories. The 12-inch free-floating aluminum

KeyMod handguard is lightweight and rugged, but its main feature is what it doesn't have: Picatinny rails all along the 12 o'clock position. By machining it without cheese grater rails across the top, Armalite has created a forend that's friendly to the popular C-clamp grip used by most 3-gunners.

Though very robust, the LUTH MBA-1 precision buttstock is one feature some shooters may consider replacing. The stock is mostly a fixed length, though minor adjustments for comb height and length of pull are possible. Shooters with a shorter length of pull, or who like a collapsible stock, will likely not enjoy this stock. While the sport of 3-gun demands accuracy,

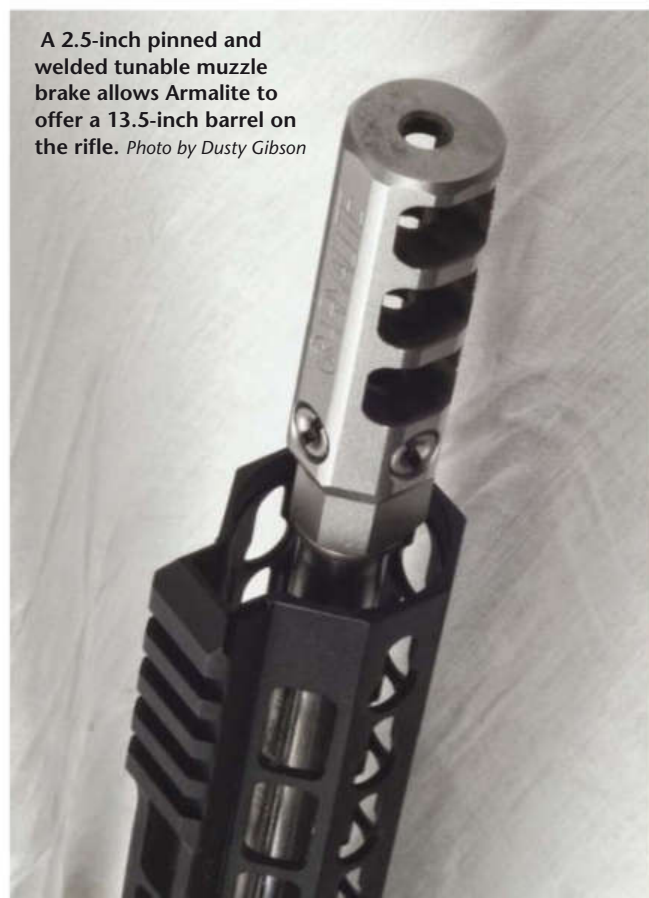
PERFORMANCE

MANUFACTURER	AVG VELOCITY (fps)	STD. DEV (fps)	AVG GROUP (in.)	BEST GROUP (in.)
Hornady 75-Grain Superformance Match BTHP	2,506	16.22	1.16	.72
Federal XM855 62-grain FMJ "Green Tips"	2,913	10.40	1.49	1.02
Tula 55-grain FMJ	2,665	24.91	2.21	1.73

it also doesn't require the bench-rest level precision a fixed stock offers. Most target engagements don't stretch past a couple hundred yards, and at those distances, the targets are usually large steel plates. Overall, the stock is desirable, but it's not the answer for every 3-gun shooter.



The rifle incorporates a largely fixed LUTH MBA-1 precision stock. Photo by Dusty Gibson



A 2.5-inch pinned and welded tunable muzzle brake allows Armalite to offer a 13.5-inch barrel on the rifle. Photo by Dusty Gibson

Armalite has assembled an exceptional collection of parts into a well-engineered rifle with quality craftsmanship. Each component on the M-15 was carefully considered based on its merits for winning 3-gun competitions.

RACE-READY PERFORMANCE

When Armalite designed a 3-gun rifle around a 13.5-inch barrel, they took two major risks: First, the barrel would be too short to stabilize heavier bullets; second, the shorter length would go against the grain and be frowned upon by 3-gun shooters.

Based on performance during range testing, Armalite's risks seem worth the reward. After testing using ammo with three different bullet weights, the shorty stainless steel barrel achieved exceptional accuracy and functioned flawlessly. Even the heavier 62- and 75-grain bullets were accurate through the barrel.

How does Armalite's 13.5-inch 3-gun rifle achieve accuracy despite its shortened length? The answer

ARMALITE M-15	
Manufacturer	Armalite; Armalite.com
Model	M-15 13-in. 3-Gun Rifle
Caliber	5.56mm NATO/.223 Remington
Barrel	13.5-inch stainless steel
Rifling Twist	1:8 RH
Gas System	Direct Impingement, mid-length, adjustable gas block
Muzzle Device	Armalite tunable brake (welded)
Handguard	12-in. free float aluminum, KeyMod
Stock	LUTH MBA-1
Receivers	Forged 7057-T6 aluminum
Safety	Ambidextrous
Trigger	Timney single stage, 3.78 lb.
Charging Handle	Raptor ambidextrous
Overall length	34.5 in.
Weight	6.9 lbs.
Magazine	Magpul PMAG
MSRP	\$1,599

is mostly rooted in its superb stainless steel barrel. Designed with a 1:8-inch twist rate, bullets are able to achieve significant spin before leaving the barrel, giving heavier bullets the stabilization needed to achieve exceptional accuracy.

Most importantly, this barrel configuration gives shooters the flexibility to use different types of ammo based on the objective of each particular 3-gun stage. Want to reach out for a long-range shot on a windy day? Load up with a 75-grain Hornady Superformance Match. Or maybe you're shooting cardboard silhouettes in close quarters? Run the cheap and dirty 55-grain imported stuff.

This flexibility doesn't stop with the barrel. Equipped with an adjustable gas block and muzzle brake, the M-15 might as well come with its own set of tuning forks. Adjusting the gas block allows shooters to tame the recoil of each particular load by controlling the amount of gas used to cycle the bolt carrier. Less gas means a lower reciprocating force to your shoulder on each shot, and therefore less muzzle rise, which keeps your sights on target.

Armalite's adjustable muzzle brake also allows shooters to custom tune their rifle with any type of ammo. Removable tuning screws on each side of the brake allow gas flow to be controlled similar to a valve. Allowing more or less gas through the tuning screws adjusts the amount of muzzle rise.

Both the muzzle brake and gas blocks require some trial and error with your preferred ammo. Making precise adjustments or messing around with these components during a match would be difficult unless the shooter is very experienced in their effects on performance.

Armalite's M-15 also uses a single-stage Timney trigger that breaks like a candy cane. As tested at 3.78 pounds, the trigger leaves nothing to be desired. In fact, during our testing, we blew through a lot of ammo because double and triple tapping was too much fun.

Overall, this compact carbine makes it crystal clear that Armalite set out to innovate the market of 3-gun rifles. From its ergonomic features to a fully adjustable operating system, this race-ready workhorse was built to win. It's also turning heads and changing what competitors expect from a factory-built, match-grade rifle. **MS**

LASERLYTE CENTERMASS GREEN DUAL LENS



Originally developed for home defense shotguns, the LaserLyte Center Mass Dual Lens laser sight projects a brilliant bright green laser spread pattern onto the target. The pattern grows at approximately 1-inch per yard, simulating the spread of a shotgun pattern with 00-buckshot. However, this sight works equally well on AR-15s during nighttime 3-gun matches.

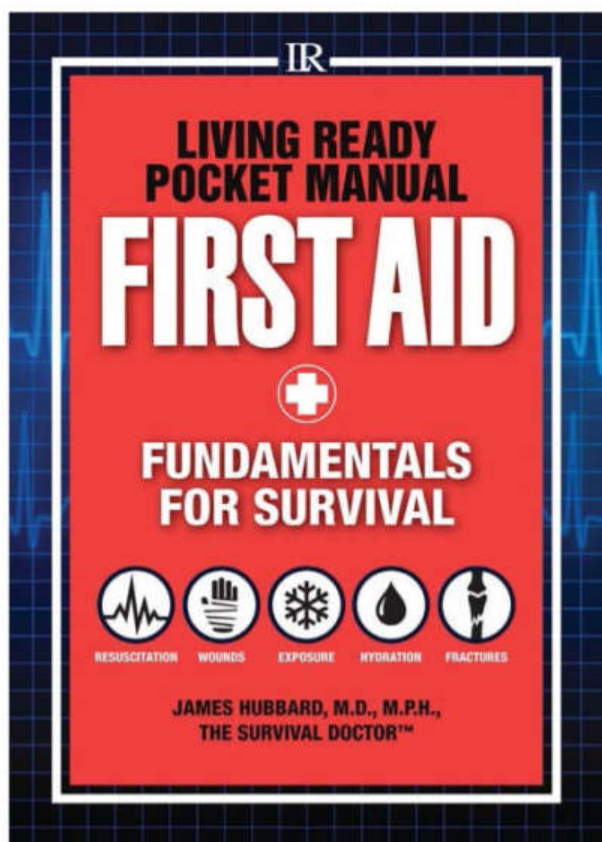
Competitors simply project the ring of eight dots onto a close range target and pull the trigger. Rather than focus on one specific aiming dot, if the ring of dots is centered on a target at close range, chances are the target will be neutralized. During competitions such as the recent Starlight Midnight 3-gun match, competitors used LaserLyte's Center Mass technology to run-and-gun after the sun went down.

The sight also has a solid green laser beam function which projects a brilliant green beam up to one mile. Mounting to any Picatinny rail, this is an excellent option for home defense or competition purposes.

Manufacturer: LaserLyte
LaserLyte.com
MSRP: \$219.95



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QUICK SHOT « STAFF REPORT

ULTICLIP

While comfort and concealability are king for many when choosing a holster for carry, one of the more overlooked—and important—aspects of holster selection is retention. Adequate retention ensures that the holster stays put throughout the day and especially when the shooter needs to draw his or her firearm.

The designers of the new UltiClip holster clip understand the importance of retention with regard to concealed and open carry and have created a clip that offers an unprecedented level of retention while remaining very

concealed. Providing more than 10 times the retention of standard holster clips, courtesy of a patent-pending design, the UltiClip installs directly onto the holster after removal of the standard clips.

Unlike most holster clips, which rely on a belt or similar support, the UltiClip requires no secondary means of support, allowing for use in a backpack, purse, pocket or boot. The replacement clips are made from C-1075 spring steel that is wax treated and sports a military-grade, black oxide finish.

The UltiClip offers a maximum clamping thickness of ¼

inch—or seven layers of denim—while remaining low profile with a weight of 0.78 ounces and a length and width of 3.5 inches and 7/8 inch, respectively. (\$9.99; UltiClip.com)



GUNCRAFTER INDUSTRIES NO NAME COMMANDER

Throughout its existence many shooters have revered the 1911, and fans of this great pistol have often turned to the Commander version for a more practical carry option. A new entry in the field of Commander-type pistols is the No Name Commander from Guncrafter Industries (GI).

As with all GI pistols, the No Name Commander starts as a fully machined frame and slide cut from American forgings before being expertly fit and finished and receiving tool steel fire control components. Like most custom 1911 makers, GI offers tons of different options and treatments for this Commander-style pistol, including frame treatment, rear grip frame shape, checkering and finish, among others. The most popular combinations incorporate


GI's 15 LPI checkering with a bob-tail for concealed carry.

Some standard features include a 4.25-inch Match Grade barrel, a beveled magazine well, a slide stop fully machined from bar stock, a single side thumb safety and a high-sweep grip safety. The

pistol has an unloaded weight of 35 ounces and is available in 9mm, .38 Super, .45 ACP and .50 GI. With the exception of the .50 GI, all of these are also available with aluminum frames for more comfortable carry. (Price varies; GuncrafterIndustries.com) **MS**



Elegant yet functional, the Guncrafter Industries No Name Commander has ample features and is available with many custom options.



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A NEW-AGE SCOUT SCOPE



If you're a fan of Col. Jeff Cooper's bolt-action brainchild, Leupold's VX-R Scout FireDot may be just the ticket.

JOSH DAHLKE

The Duplex reticle is designed for simplistic utility. Combined with Leupold's illuminated FireDot, it's ideal for rapid target acquisition and accurate snap shooting.



ONE RIFLE TO DO IT ALL. FIGHTING. HUNTING. SURVIVING.

That was Col. Jeff Cooper's vision when he started conceptualizing the scout rifle platform in the late 1960s. According to Richard Mann, my friend and author of the upcoming book, "The Scout Rifle Study," Cooper's project all started when he mounted an extended eye relief scope to his Remington Model 600. "For the next 30 years, he tried to improve on the concept by working with a number of custom scout creations," Mann explained.

Since its inception, a handful of gun manufacturers have tried to breathe life into Cooper's concept. It's been closely replicated by some, bastardized by others. It seems a hefty majority of scout rifle experts, such as Mann, argue that Steyr built the truest form of the scout.

An authentic scout rifle sports a handful of very specific attributes, including but definitely not limited to: a maximum weight of 6.6-7.7 pounds and length of 1 meter; a magazine-fed bolt-action chambered in .308 Win.; plus, a sighting system with iron sights and, ideally, a forward-mounted scope with low magnification. All in all, it's meant to be a general-purpose rifle that could serve you under a wide variety of circumstances if it were the only rifle in your arsenal.

But the point of this article isn't to pontificate about

the ins and outs of scout rifles—if you want that, get Mann's book when it's published in early 2016. Rather, I'm here to offer my review of a particular all-American optic from Leupold that's designed for the scout rifle platform. So let's get to it.

EVALUATING THE OPTIC

What makes a scope suitable for a scout rifle? Extended eye relief, low magnification and minimal weight are all key criteria. That's how I'll first evaluate the VX-R Scout FireDot riflescope from Leupold, mounted atop my Ruger Gunsite Scout Rifle (GSR).

EYE RELIEF, ETC.

The most important scout scope characteristic is that



Leupold's VX-R FireDot riflescope contains 1/4-MOA windage and elevation adjustments. Every click is audible and easily felt.

it must offer plenty of eye relief, because it needs to be mounted in front of the rifle's ejection port. The scope must not interfere with ejection of spent cartridges, nor prevent efficient manual reloading of single cartridges directly into the chamber. Additionally, Cooper felt long eye relief gives the shooter better peripheral vision for situational awareness. These traits are desirable for battle and hunting applications—an impending threat can come from where you least expect it, and so can a big, meaty buck while you're so intently focused on the tender backstraps of a smaller doe.

According to Leupold, at the peak allowance of its adjustable-focus eyepiece, the VX-R Scout FireDot offers an eye relief of approximately 6 inches at its lowest magnification (1.8x actual) and 7 inches at its highest magnification (4.7x actual). With a comfortable, natural cheek weld on my GSR, a quick measurement from

my dominant eye to the ocular lens found those numbers to be accurate. This scope barely misses the mark by about 2 inches if you want to mount it forward of the GSR's ejection port and still achieve its full field-of-view at all magnification levels. If you cheat it just slightly, you can mount the scope in Cooper's proper position and you'll still get a respectable viewing window.

Speaking of field-of-view, this scope won't let you miss much activity downrange. At its lowest magnification, you'll get a 43-foot FOV at 100 yards. Zoom-in to 5x and your view will span 17 feet from right to left at the end of a football field.

MAGNIFICATION AND MORE

Leupold didn't miss the mark when it comes to magnification levels baked into the VX-R FireDot. Cooper fancied a low-magnification, fixed-power scope

THE SCOUT RIFLE STUDY

Richard Mann is a Gunsite Academy alumnus and an avid rifleman. Mann will openly admit he's become obsessed with the evolution and adaptations of the scout rifle platform, so he decided to collect his knowledge and research of the gun and compile everything into a book called "The Scout Rifle Study: And the Realization of the General-Purpose Rifle." If you're interested in getting a comprehensive scout education, you can learn more about the book (and maybe even get an autographed copy) at Mann's website, Empty-Cases.com/Blog.

with less than 4x zoom. This Leupold is 1.5-5x, making it ideal for close-quarters action or long-range pokes. Sure, it goes one notch above 4x, but who's complaining about that? Personally, I do more hunting than gun fighting, and I'm hoping to keep it that way. Without getting too outlandish, I've appreciated the benefits of some extra magnification more times than I can count—and so have the animals that died quicker deaths because of better precision on my end.

Now is a good time to mention the FireDot part of this riflescope. The FireDot is Leupold's proprietary illuminated red dot. It turns

A SCOUT OF MY OWN

My introduction to the scout rifle platform was by happenstance. I was invited to test the qualifications of an EOTech holographic sight combined with a magnifier as a sighting system for big-game hunting. Elk were the primary target, with mule deer as a second item on the menu. My cronies naturally went with ARs—a ready fit for an EOTech—but for nostalgic reasons, I wanted to kill my first elk with a bolt gun and not a modern sporting rifle.

Ruger's Gunsite Scout Rifle (GSR) seemed like a good fit for the EOTech combo; plus, its shocking good looks intrigued me. At the recommendation of Richard Mann, I added a custom extended Picatinny rail from XS Sight Systems to house both components of the unconventional sighting system. Boom. I loved my new elk rig. The bull I killed on the fourth day of the hunt ... he probably wasn't too fond of it. The EOTech did its job on the hunt and was a giving friend

to my GSR, but an "old-fashioned" riflescope is undoubtedly more practical and effective for pursuing Western big game. So, I was on a mission to find a best friend for my roughneck scout. As of now, it's the Leupold VX-R FireDot.

Admittedly, my scout rifle setup is a dirty hybrid by Col. Cooper's definition, but it will always occupy a spot in my gun vault—especially if I must keep only one.

on and delivers adjustable illumination levels with the press of a button. In this scout scope, you can choose to light up the dot in the center of the black Duplex reticle, or just leave the reticle unlit. The main benefit of the FireDot, especially fitting for a scout rifle, is rapid target acquisition and faster snap shooting. However, if the you-know-what hits the fan and you're stuck in a compound with diminishing supplies, you might run out of batteries to power the FireDot. But no worries—you'll always have the trusty Duplex reticle at your disposal. An auto-off feature will shut down the FireDot after 5 minutes of rest, but it'll fire back up immediately when you shoulder your rifle.

How about overall optical quality and low-light visibility? Like most other Leupold optics, the glass is great. Colors are true, edge-to-edge clarity is excellent, and the eye is generally pleased by this riflescope. When the sun goes down and a certain antlered beast shows up on the fringe of legal shooting light, you can count on seeing his vitals out to 100 yards or more. God forbid you need to defend your castle and remove threats under ambient city lights, but this scope will allow you to do so at even longer distances of 200-300 yards with shocking accuracy.

WEIGHING-IN

The VX-R FireDot is at the top end of the scale for a

scout scope. It weighs 14.2 ounces. Combined with the 7.1-pound GSR, that brings my scout setup to about 8 pounds. Yep, it's overweight, but the primary culprit here is the rifle—not the ultra-durable Gold Ring optic.

Ruger's composite GSR shaves off another pound and, like its laminate older brother, it's a shooter. I've fired both versions, and with the right ammo (Federal's Trophy Bonded Tip), they're MOA or even sub-MOA rifles from the bench. But a pound lost still doesn't bring it under Cooper's 6.6-pound ideal weight, and that's not even including the mandatory sling or other accessories.

FINAL WORD

All these grueling details bring me to my bottom line. I think Col. Cooper's scout rifle concept is sensible, attractive and downright responsible. Every responsible citizen should own a general-purpose rifle, and that's why I always will. And if you own one, it ought to have good glass on it. However, at the risk of ruffling the feathers of those who adhere to traditional scout rifle specs as gospel, I don't believe it's essential to follow the scout godfather's commandments to a "T."

Every great concept needs underlying standards, but there's always room for personal deviation for sinners like me. Stick to the underlying principles of Cooper's scout—and a reliable optic to match—and it'll be your first choice in a rifle when it's time to bug out. **MS**

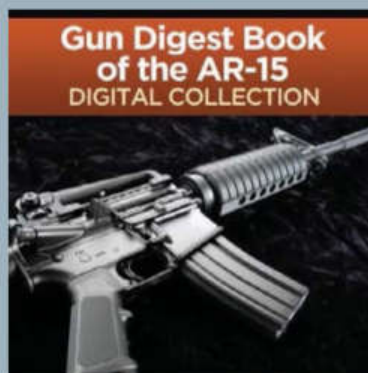
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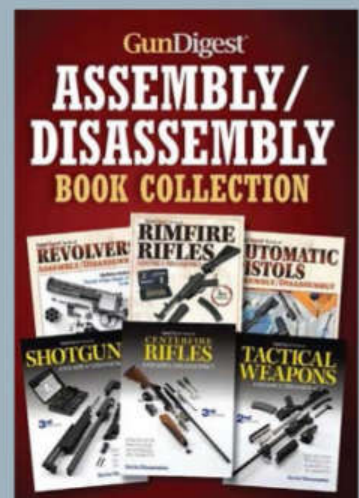
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